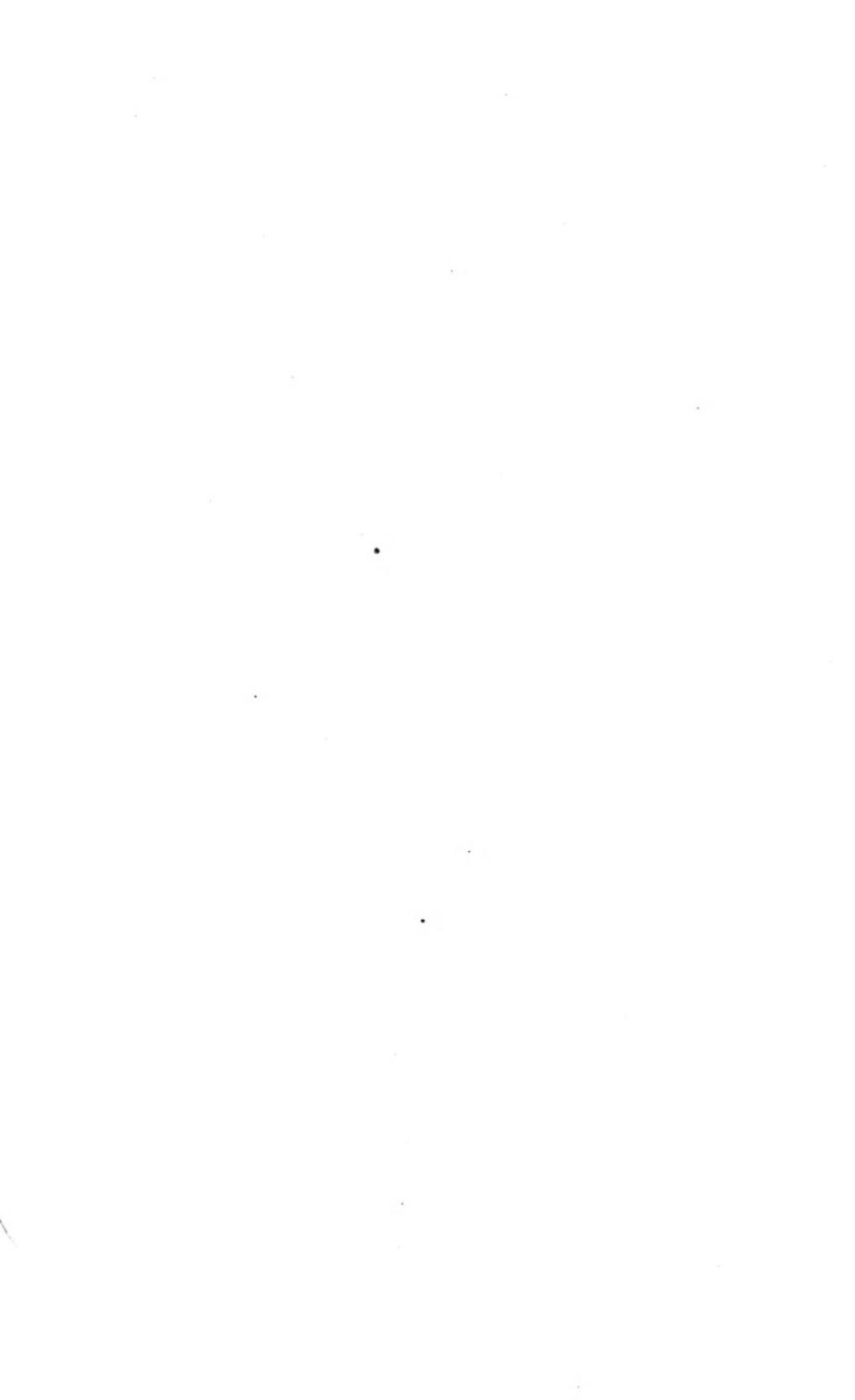




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# AIDS TO SCRIPTURE STUDY

BY

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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IN presenting this work to the public, a few introductory and explanatory remarks seem necessary.

The book was prepared several years ago, and laid aside in the abundance of other occupation. It had been the intention of the author to take it up afresh, and to rewrite it wholly. He had, in fact, made all preparations for so doing last summer, just before his unlooked for and lamented death. He had gone over the manuscript, had made some changes, and had indicated the places where other alterations were desirable.

In the places thus indicated the editor has felt at liberty to modify the text, following as a guide a course of lectures upon the interpretation of the New Testament which were delivered by Dr. Gardiner, at Newton Theological Institute, in 1884. In other passages, it has seemed

to him proper to confine himself closely to the original text, except where he could be guided by the lectures in the use of forms of expression more nearly representing the mature consideration and deliberate choice of the author.

No apology is needed for publishing a work upon a subject of such general interest and importance, which, moreover, in the opinion of several eminent theological scholars, seems likely to be useful not only to students in the seminaries, but also to the ever increasing class of earnest and devoted students of the Scriptures in our Churches and Bible Classes ; especially as the methods suggested have been approved by long use and experience, being those which the author himself was accustomed to follow in his own work and to recommend in his class room.

Some hesitation was felt in publishing a work of Dr. Gardiner's which had not had the benefit of his scholarly and accurate editorial supervision ; but, in the desire to continue and extend his usefulness, and in the confidence that those who are familiar with his former works will attribute any errors that may appear to the

circumstances of the case, the book is put forth with the earnest wish and hope that it may fulfill the purpose for which it was written — “ *Ad majorem DEI gloriam.* ”

HENRY FERGUSON.

TRINITY COLLEGE, HARTFORD,

*May 5, 1890.*



## PREFACE.

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OF late years the growth of interest in Biblical studies has been marked, and the increase of commentaries has been most noticeable. There has not been any corresponding attention given, in this country at least, to the systematic treatment of the principles of interpretation. In Germany many such treatises have been published since the days of Ernesti, among the more recent of which may be mentioned those of Keil, Döpke, Pareau, Klausen, Lutz, Schleiermacher, Lücke, Wilke, and Immer. Some of these have been translated, and have proved of great value, especially the "Hermeneutics of the New Testament," by Dr. A. Immer, translated and edited in America by Professor Newman. Something has also been done of the same kind in France in Cellerier's "Manuel d'Herméneutique," and in Great Britain several treatises have appeared, among which may be mentioned those of David-

son and of Fairbairn, besides the discussion of the subject in the course of more comprehensive works of introduction to the Scriptures. Münscher's "Manual of Biblical Interpretation" witnesses that the matter has not been wholly overlooked in our own country. Most of these treatises have been upon the interpretation of the New Testament alone, and it is believed there is still need of a fresh work adapted to the habits of thought and study of the American scholar. The present volume is an attempt to supply this need. Its plan is so different from that of preceding works upon the subject, that it is likely to be marked by the imperfection of a venture in a new path; but it is hoped that it may still be of use to the student, and may open the way for more perfect works to follow.

The Hermeneutics of the Old and the New Testaments have so much in common, the connection between them is so very close, and the details in which they differ may be so concisely treated, that it has seemed wise to include them both in one work. This plan has also the obvious and considerable advantage of bringing out more clearly the essential unity of Scripture.

The discussion in the Introduction renders it unnecessary to speak here of the view of inspiration taken in this work: suffice it to say that while the Bible is regarded as the word of God in the truest meaning of that phrase, it is yet written by men; and to ascertain its meaning the ordinary laws of interpretation must be regarded. At the same time, while the historicoc-grammatical method must be everywhere employed to ascertain the sense of Scripture, it must be used in constant remembrance that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate Author of the Scripture teaching, and in view of the great object for which that teaching has been made known to men.



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## AIDS TO SCRIPTURE STUDY.

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### INTRODUCTION.

IN order to interpret the Bible aright, it is first of all essential to determine the nature and character of the Book with which we have to do. It is a book which is neither new nor unknown, and it is therefore entirely unnecessary to deal with it as if it now met our eyes for the first time. On the contrary, it has been before the world for so many ages, and a certain general interpretation of it has contributed so largely to the formation of Christian civilization and society, that many things may be considered as fixed by common consent. Certain points, however, still remain under discussion ; and as these materially affect our view of its character, it will be necessary to say something upon them before setting forth in detail the principles of its interpretation.

Two leading views have been and continue to be held among Christians : one, that the Bible is

the word of God, given indeed to men, and communicated through men, with all their individual peculiarities, but so guarded by the providence of God as to be absolutely reliable ; the other, that it is a collection of books written by men inspired of God, but yet expressing His truth and His will in such fashion as conceived by themselves, so as to contain many serious and important errors. In other words, these two views are commonly and tersely expressed by saying, one, that *the Bible is the word of God* ; the other, that *it contains the word of God*. It is plain that any system of interpretation must be greatly affected by whichever of these views lies at its foundation. It is proposed, therefore, to discuss this question as an introduction to the principles of Hermeneutics which are to follow.

The only way of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion in the premises is by examining the facts as they are presented in the Scriptures themselves, and basing our theory upon the result.<sup>1</sup>

The first fact to be observed is, that the Scriptures have in them both something which is divine and something which is human. This is so generally admitted that it is not worth while

<sup>1</sup> The substance of this discussion has already been printed as an article on "Errors in the Scriptures" in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for July, 1879, and in a paper read before the Church Congress in Richmond, Va., in October, 1882.

to spend much time in its reëxamination. That there is in them somewhat that is divine, and divine in a higher sense than Homer or Dante may be said to have a divine element, is abundantly shown by the work which they have done and are doing in the world ; that they have also somewhat which is human is sufficiently obvious from the idiosyncrasies of the several writers, and from the varying style and manner in which they have delivered the message entrusted to their care. Yet, inasmuch as both sides of this fundamental fact have been called in question by the advocates of opposite theories, it may be well to point briefly to a single and satisfactory proof of each of them.

That the Scriptures have in them something which is human is proved by the fact that both the Old and the New Testaments, as we have them, do contain undeniable errors. In the New Testament, errors of copyists — most of them of little consequence, but still errors — have been brought to light in great abundance. It may be replied that these are matters which human care can rectify, and that inspiration was never intended to take away from man the trouble of ascertaining what it really said. This does not matter. These errors remained in the text unsuspected for centuries, and some of them still, and probably always will, remain ; for no

competent critic would pretend to say that the text is in all cases now definitely settled, or that it is ever likely to be. In the Old Testament, manuscripts of proportionate antiquity are wanting, and the best and oldest of the versions give but a poor apparatus for the criticism of the text. Nevertheless, we may become certain, by a comparison of parallel passages, that errors exist in one or other of them. For example, when the census of the captives returning from the Babylonian exile as given in Ezra ii. and in Neh. vii. is compared, it becomes plain that there must be several errors in one or the other or in both of them. Or, if we put the statement in 1 Kings iv. 26, that Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses, by the side of that in 2 Chron. ix. 25, that he had four thousand, it is obvious that one of them has been either multiplied or divided by ten. This being admitted, another step may be taken, and an error assumed if absolutely impossible statements are found in the text ; as, when it is said (2 Sam. xv. 7) that “after forty years” Absalom did certain things in furtherance of his rebellious plans, while it is known from other parts of the story that Absalom’s whole life was less than forty years. And this being granted, the critic will not hesitate to apply the same principle to other statements having such an extreme degree of improbability

as to amount to a practical impossibility ; as when it is said that the Philistines mustered to battle thirty thousand chariots (1 Sam. xiii. 5). The errors thus far spoken of in both Testaments are, no doubt, mere *lapsus* of the scribes ; nevertheless, there they are, and often there is no other than conjectural means of correcting them. They prove that there are errors in the Bible, and make simply impossible the extreme theory of verbal inspiration, at least as far as the actual Scriptures in our possession are concerned. Only undeniable errors have been mentioned, that the evidence may be clear that there is a human element in the Bible. How far does it extend ?

On the other hand, it is equally clear that the Scriptures have in them somewhat that is more than human ; for they contain truth, which, outside of them, man has never discovered for himself ; and if any one is disposed to argue that man might ultimately have discovered it, yet he certainly did not, and could not, at the time at which it was revealed. It is not necessary here to appeal to prophecy, or to anything else to which a possible objection may be made ; it is enough to refer to the broad fact that the gospel has introduced into the world truths unknown, or at least unregarded, before, which when announced are recognized of all men to be

true, and has given to these truths practical sanctions of sufficient power to transform the institutions, culture, and principles of action of those parts of the world in which it has been received. Nothing but religion has ever had such power over the minds and hearts of men, at least on any large scale; and no other religion can compare with the Christian in the assurance it conveys of having been inspired from on high. The older revelation is distinctly recognized and made its starting-point by the new; and besides this, mankind generally have not failed to recognize in such parts as some of the Psalms a spirit and aspirations breathed into them from a higher than human source, because they commend themselves as in harmony with all that is most divine, and no human compositions, except as based upon them, have ever reached so high a strain. The evidence in this case, being of a higher kind, is necessarily less tangible than in the former; it is sufficient for the present purpose that it is generally admitted by the common sense of mankind.

There are but three possible theories in regard to the Scriptures: first, that they are purely human; secondly, that they are purely divine, even to their minutest detail; and thirdly, that they are at once human and divine. The first two have already appeared untenable; the third

alone remains. Accepting this, a most interesting and important question arises as to the relations or proportions of these two elements in the Bible. It is a question which can never be entirely solved, any more than it is possible to draw a definite line in the complex action of the human and the divine spirit. The two elements are there, and their union has produced the actual result, without the possibility of assigning to each an independent part of the work. Both have coöperated in the whole. It may be compared to the doctrine of the church in regard to our Lord, in whom the two natures are inseparably (*ἀδιαιρέτως*) united, though without confusion. Yet even in this case there are limitations in the activity of either nature; the divine nature did not prevent Him as an earthly child from growing in wisdom as well as in stature, and the human nature did not hinder Him from speaking as never man spake. In regard to our present subject, it is of great practical importance to ascertain, as far as may be possible, such limitations as actually exist.

An obvious limitation to the divine element of the Bible is, that the inspiring Spirit has not seen fit to do away with the manhood and individuality of the various writers. The personality, the temperament, the habits of thought and culture of each particular writer are manifest in

his writings. The same truth is taught by John, Paul, and James, but in such different guise that they have been imagined to contradict one another. No one can fail to recognize the differences in manner of utterance between the courtly Isaiah, the despondent Jeremiah, the priestly Ezekiel, and the princely Daniel. The Scriptures have certainly been given *πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως*. It is one office of these differences to adapt the Scriptures to minds of every class and mode of thought; it is essential to the life-like character of the sacred narrative; and it has become an important means of determining the genuineness and authenticity of the various books.

Our main question, however, is with the limitations of the human element. It has already appeared that there is no such limitation of this as to prevent errors of the copyists in the transmission of the sacred records. But the writers lived in times far apart, and all of them long gone by, and must themselves have shared in the crude and erroneous notions of their times concerning natural science, history, ethnology, archæology, and many other matters. Have these errors become incorporated, through the human writers, in the Bible itself? or has their humanity been so overshadowed, limited, and controlled by the inspiring Spirit within them,

that the expression of such errors has been prevented? This is a question simply of fact, and must be decided by an examination of the evidence.

First, let it be distinctly understood what is meant by error. It is something more or less false and wrong as proceeding from that imperfect knowledge of the truth — whether moral, mental, or physical — which belonged to the times in which the writers lived, and in which they unquestionably shared. Such errors are commonly alleged as abounding in the Bible; and if this is true, there is in this respect no limitation of the human side of the Scriptures. But if it is not true, then it is obvious that there must have been such a limitation extending through many ages; and the Bible, consequently, presents a prodigy quite equal to any of the miracles it records, and similarly makes a corresponding demand upon our faith.

The most serious errors thus alleged are moral contradictions, — instances in which words or deeds are commended, or even commanded, especially in the older Scriptures, which are inconsistent with the divine character as made known in later revelation. Some space will be devoted to these farther on. Meantime it is to be considered that the various writers speak freely of whatever comes in their way in the

language and according to the ideas of their time, and that those ideas and that language were often wrong. It is argued by many, with apparent fairness, that this concludes errors upon the Scriptures; because the writing must be interpreted according to what the writer meant to say, and in order to this his language must be examined in the light of the views and opinions he is known to have held. Is this reasoning valid?

Take a few test cases. The Bible frequently speaks of the rising and setting of the sun, and its writers undoubtedly supposed that the sun went round the earth, and that this expression was literally true. It has proved to be untrue. Are the Scriptures so committed to this error that it may be cited as one of the scientific errors of the Scriptures? If so, the case may at once be given up; but if not, it will certainly be hard to cite a clearer instance. The language of the Bible is in opposition to the facts of science, and the writers who used it were ignorant of those facts; while the Copernican system was under discussion, and before its truth was established, it was generally held that the Bible was committed to the opposite view. Here, then, are all the elements of what is called an error; it is acknowledged that the statement is false, and that the writers who used it believed

it to be true ; it is notorious that when its truth was first called in question the interpreters of the Bible with one voice assured the world that the point had been definitely pronounced upon in holy writ, and that no other view could be taken without a flat contradiction of the Bible. Nevertheless, the opposite view was established, and nobody's faith was disturbed. It was found that men still went on speaking of the rising and setting of the sun, although acknowledging themselves the disciples of Copernicus. The common sense of mankind has settled it that there is no error here. The Scripture writers merely used the popular language of their times, and of all times, in alluding to the natural phenomena around them ; Galileo himself would still have used the same language. This is a typical case.

Let us take another instance. Moses speaks of the coney (*Hyrax Syriacus*) as unclean, although he chews the cud, because he does not divide the hoof (Lev. xi. 5), and so of some other animals ; on the other hand, the swine (ver. 7) is accounted unclean, because he does not chew the cud, although he divides the hoof. All this is wrong. The coney does not really chew the cud, but merely has a way of moving his lower jaw which gives him the appearance of doing so ; and the swine does not divide the hoof,

because, anatomically, he has four toes. In the same connection it is said (ver. 4) that the camel chews the cud, but does not divide the hoof; but anatomically he does divide the hoof, only he has a large pad which comes down behind the hoof, and on which he treads; so that the description of Moses, while right to the eye, is scientifically wrong. In general, this whole distinction is wrongly taken. Chewing the cud and dividing the hoof are correlated developments, so that, as far as science has yet observed, all animals which do the one do the other also, although it is very possible that exceptions may hereafter be discovered to this law. Now was this an error on the part of Moses; and is it an error of the Bible? Technically and superficially, of course it is, but not really. Moses himself may very likely have been but an indifferent comparative anatomist; but this cannot be determined simply from this use of language. He was giving a law for popular observance, and must necessarily mark his distinctions according to appearances, or expose the people to be continually involved in transgression. The same thing would happen now. Suppose a modern legislature wishing to pass a law for the protection of blackberries, raspberries, and other small fruit; would it not describe them as *berries*? Yet, botanically, those named are not berries,

while the grape and the tomato, which undoubtedly would require separate provisions in the law, are scientifically berries. So in this case; it does not matter what was the extent or the deficiency of Moses' own private information. The exigencies of the time and the circumstances required that the law should be expressed as it is, and it would have failed of its purpose had it been set forth in the technicalities of modern science. Shall we then say that such errors were unavoidable, and therefore Scripture must contain errors which betray the imperfection of human knowledge, and show that the human element was not so limited as to prevent error? Or shall we conclude that before the highest tribunal these are really no errors at all, but merely the condescension of infinite knowledge in making itself comprehensible to men of limited information? For ourselves, we prefer the latter alternative, in view of the fact that Cuvier or Owen, or even Mr. Huxley himself, with whatever superior knowledge, must still have used substantially the same language, if giving a law under similar circumstances, and with the design of having it observed. But really the question is merely one of words, whichever we choose; since if these are to be called errors, they are yet errors which indicate neither faulty knowledge nor the neces-

sary restriction of the source of the Scriptures to the human imperfection of the period in which they were written. There is nothing in these to show that the writings containing them may not have been inspired by perfect knowledge, adapting its revelation to the imperfections of the human knowledge of the time.

Once more, to take an instance which has been the occasion of endless discussion — the cosmogony of Genesis. Here both the main fact and the subordinate details are necessarily beyond the scope of human observation ; and both the one and the other must either have been revealed, or else must have been the conclusion of speculative thought. It is not uncommon to explain one of them in one way, and the other in the other, — to say that the main fact is that all things originate from a divine source ; this was revealed and intended to be taught ; but it was left to the writer to communicate this as best he could ; and he actually did communicate it as best he could, in accordance with such knowledge as he had, or in such way as he could best imagine, and after the lapse of several thousand years his information has proved to be faulty. Now, it must be admitted that, under any possible exegesis, the account itself, if pressed to minutiae, is scientifically inaccurate. The word “day” may be understood (if

this be exegetically allowable) of periods never so indefinite, or it may be taken to indicate only a series of pictorial visions ; the phrases “Let the earth bring forth” and “Let the waters bring forth” may be taken, with Augustine and many others, in a causative sense, in accordance with a theory of spontaneous generation ; still, the palpable fact will remain that the introduction of the higher forms of vegetation upon our planet was not completed before animal life began, while it is certainly implied by the story of the third and fifth days in Genesis that it was ; nor were the highest developments of aquatic life known before terrestrial animals appeared.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, as in the former cases, there is error. It is not sufficient for our present purpose to say that this error is in a secondary detail, and

<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely worth while to stay to notice some alleged minor errors, such as that God is said to have *set* the sun and moon in the firmament, as if he had permanently fastened them to a solid vault. There is no proof whatever that the Hebrews shared in the conception of the classical nations of the *expanse* (such is the meaning of the Hebrew word) above being solid ; but whether they did so or not, it is certain that Moses, or any one else of sufficient intelligence to have written this narrative, must have known of the motion of the moon relatively to the sun. He could not therefore have meant that both were fixed or attached to a solid foundation, but must necessarily have used the Hebrew word in its ordinary sense of *put* or *placed*, and not in the technical meaning of the English word *set*.

is comparatively unimportant. It is necessary to ascertain whether the detail containing the error is the outgrowth of human ignorance, or whether it belongs to the divine revelation. There are reasons for thinking that it could not have come from merely human reasoning or imagination. The account is too good, it is too nearly scientifically accurate, to admit fairly of this supposition. Among all the cosmogonies of which we know it is unique in this respect. The best accounts of the creation found elsewhere have probably either come originally from the same source, or have been modified by this. The nearest approach to it is the Etruscan, of which, at present, we know only through the account given of it by a Christian writer of the tenth or eleventh century ;<sup>1</sup> and this, such as it is, differs exactly in the point of being less in harmony with the teachings of science. The Chaldean legends of the creation — not to speak of their being overlaid and interpenetrated with a mass of mythological absurdity — have plainly been derived originally from the same source with the story in Genesis, and cannot, therefore, help us to account for its truth.<sup>2</sup> Even Knobel,

<sup>1</sup> Suidas, Lex. s. v. *Tυρπητία*.

<sup>2</sup> Of the “Chaldean Genesis” it has well been said by an able writer that “though corresponding in some interesting particulars with the Biblical narrative, [it] lacked precisely this

after recounting these and various other cosmogonies, says, “Of all these, the prize belongs by universal acknowledgment to the simple and natural, dignified and sublime Hebrew narrative.” It is so difficult to suppose that such a cosmogony should have been the result of merely human speculation in the remote ages to which it belongs, that it would be much easier to consider it a divine revelation throughout, but for the errors mentioned above. Let us, then, look more narrowly at those errors before deciding that they are inconsistent with a revelation from the Omniscient.

The general order of creation is given with entire accuracy, — first chaos, then light, then a fluid mass, then a separation of the dry land from the waters, then life beginning in its lowest vegetative forms and advancing through aquatic

worth and reformatory power, [viz. : in purifying countries of idolatries, and sweeping away superstitions ; in keeping fresh and fruitful faith in one God and the common parentage of man]. “These traditions of the creation never became powers of a growing religious history. They are like stagnant pools of water, themselves choked with corruptions, — not flowing fountains of life. They did not stir and cleanse the moral stagnation of Babylon. The vital power of truth to create a purer and growing life is the characteristic virtue of the very first words of inspiration. A thoughtful man, with the Biblical truth of the Creator working as a moral force in his soul, became the father of a nation whose end is not yet.” — *Old Faiths in New Light*, by Newman Smyth, p. 74.

animal life to terrestrial, all finally culminating in the appearance of man. The celestial bodies, sun, moon, and stars, are mentioned just when they must have first shone through the murky atmosphere of the cooling earth. The only difficulty is, that when the beginning of vegetation has been mentioned its story is continued without break to its culmination ; and the same thing is done, also, with marine life. Is there any way of accounting for this consistently with the supposition that the whole story emanated from Omniscience ? We think it is not merely accounted for, but necessitated by the circumstances of the revelation. For this revelation must be given in such wise as to be comprehended by a rude people, and therefore must be given without the use of scientific terms ; and in accordance with the proportion of revelation it must be given very briefly. Its purpose is not to teach natural science, but to show that all things come from God.<sup>1</sup> Whether the revela-

<sup>1</sup> And thus to prepare for the possibility of future science. "If we may suppose the existence of a Divine Instructor whose intention it was in the course of time to open to the knowledge of man the secrets of the earth, and to educate the world at length into a thorough conception of the order of nature ; then we may say that he gave one of the first conditions of that knowledge, and provided one of the necessary preparations for that future education, by freeing the mind of man from subjection to the powers of nature, and setting the human soul above the world, as itself made in the divine image,

tion was made by vision, or by whatever other method, its object could hardly be otherwise accomplished than in the way it has been, by mentioning in succession the great features of the world, and saying that God made each of them. To have said that He made first the humbler forms of vegetation, particularizing them ; and then the humbler forms of animal life, particularizing these too ; and then the higher forms, first of the one, and then of the other ; and lastly the highest of each of them in succession, would but have introduced prolixity and unnecessary confusion of mind. No wise man now would be likely to adopt such a method of teaching his child. He would tell him that God made all things,—the earth and the sky, the sun, moon, and stars ; He made the grass, too, and the trees ; the fishes and the birds and the animals ; and last of all He made man. This is precisely what the Omniscient taught those who were in their spiritual infancy. In this teaching there is no evidence of the error of imperfect knowledge, but only of an adaptation to the exigencies under which the revelation must be made. It leads men at once to the great fea-

and, in short, by first drilling patiently the human reason and heart into those pure monotheistic conceptions which distinguish the religion of the Bible.” — *Old Faiths in New Light*, pp. 136, 137.

tures of the truth ; it leads them to the exact detail, as far as they were capable of being led at the time ; its apparent error is simply from its generality and its brevity. To have been more precisely accurate, merely to teach a scientific detail which man in due time could and would find out for himself, would have required a prolixity unsuited to the occasion.

It may be said, in this and several other cases, that the result is the same, whether we suppose the statements to be those of imperfect human knowledge, or of Omnipotence adapting itself to human ignorance ; in either case, the imperfect statement remains. In a certain sense this is true, and is a necessity of any progressive revelation, and, in fact, of any revelation, to men of limited knowledge ; but the view to be taken of the Scriptures depends greatly on whether we consider this imperfection the result of man's speculation or of God's condescension. In the one case, we have the human element of the Bible without limitation, and can rely upon it only in so far as man's wisdom is trustworthy ; in the other, we have the teaching of Omnipotence itself, and only need to take into account that He taught men according as they were able to bear. The cosmogony of Genesis, to say the least, is consistent with the latter hypothesis.

The three examples now given are enough to

show how all alleged errors of this kind may be treated, *i. e.*, all errors which are sometimes considered as the result of imperfect knowledge, and especially those which come within the scope of natural science. They are due not to the human imperfection of the writers, but to that of the readers; they are simply the necessary limitation of revelation in making itself intelligible to those to whom it was given. They are consistent, therefore, with the view that all the teaching of the Scriptures is controlled by infinite knowledge, and that the human writers have been so limited as to prevent their introducing into them the errors of their own private notions. Not, of course, that the Omniscient can be convicted of imperfect knowledge, but that for man's sake he has seen fit to use such language and such incomplete statements as man has been able to receive, and which should ultimately become the means, through the spiritual education they afforded him, of enabling man himself, in some degree, to fill out what was insufficient in them.

This leads to the consideration of another class of errors with which the Bible is charged. From its earliest to its latest books there is evident a gradually growing conception of the spirituality and infinity of the Father of all. The representation of God as walking in the garden

in the cool of the day, and inquiring of guilty man where he might be found, would be out of place in the New Testament, and would clash with the way in which the divine Being is there spoken of. Hence it is argued that the Old Testament conception of God is a human and a false one ; that it represents Him as an exaggerated man, changing His plans and repenting of what He has done, pleased with one action of His creatures, grieved with another, and frequently using purely human methods and contrivances for the accomplishment of His purposes. It may be remarked, in passing, that the same objection applies — in a less degree, indeed, but still in its essential point — to the New Testament also, and to all human discourse about the infinite ; for this must of necessity be expressed chiefly in concrete and figurative terms. But this remark does not meet the difficulty ; for, whatever be the necessities of human language, there is a manifest progress in the course of the long ages during which the composition of the various books of the Bible was going on. During these ages man's conception of God was purified and exalted, and, as this change is reflected in the books of the various ages, it is easy to attribute the change in the books themselves to the improved conceptions of the writers. On this supposition, whatever is imperfect and

erroneous belongs to the writers, and gives evidence that the human element has not been so limited as to prevent the introduction of error.

An entirely different view may also be taken of these errors, referring them to the Omniscient Source of the Scriptures ; and if this view becomes on examination probable, or even possible, the basis of any sure inferences from the opposite view will be taken away. If it can be still farther shown that even the earlier Scriptural conceptions of the Deity embrace features which were beyond the reach of the men of the time, or of any time, except as they have been taught by revelation, then it will be clear that the representations, as a whole, come from a divine source, and cannot be considered as errors at all, except in the same sense as those already considered. An examination of the facts will lead to the latter conclusion.

Nothing can be more true than the assertion of modern philosophy that the Infinite Being is, and must always have been, in his own ultimate essence, *unknowable* to finite man. Were it conceivable that He should reveal Himself as He is, the revelation would have no value or significance for us, because we could not understand it. Any useful revelation must be in terms adapted to the human understanding, and hence must be partial and imperfect, and, in that

sense, erroneous. Nevertheless, it may be of the utmost value, not because of the side which is imperfect, but because of that partial truth which man could not otherwise attain. And this being attained leads on to ever higher and higher, though still imperfect, truth, and meantime enables man to guide his life in far closer correspondence to the divine will than would otherwise be practicable. The possibility of a revelation is here assumed, although this is not the place to inquire how it is possible. The personal conviction of the writer is clear that it can only be made through a Mediator,— that the infinite and the finite, the divine and the human, are incommensurable terms, which can only be brought together in one who partakes of the nature of both, and hence that the incarnation is the fundamental fact in the possibility of revelation. But however this may be, we assume that a revelation exists, and we are concerned only to know what are the limitations upon its human side. Revelation must be given in terms adapted to human comprehension in order to be intelligible: and hence it follows that it must be given at various times, in terms adapted to the varying capacities of those times. In the spiritual infancy of the race it must be vastly more anthropomorphic than is necessary after thousands of years of continued spiritual education. And

after the higher revelation has been given, it will still be desirable that the earlier, and in this respect lower, shall remain for the benefit of those not yet prepared for the higher; and this is a condition through which all pass in the course of their lives, and in which, perhaps, some remain permanently fixed.

If, therefore, the fact be accepted that God is what in the imperfection of our language we are fain to describe as merciful and loving, it follows that in any revelation of himself he will not reveal himself perfectly,—that is, absolutely truly,—but only partially, as man is able to bear it; and this must be, in a certain sense, untruly or erroneously. Revelation must, therefore, be marked in different ages by different degrees of this imperfection or so-called erroneousness of teaching. Men must be trained through inferior conceptions — such conceptions as it was possible to awaken in them without violating the laws of their nature — to enable them to rise to higher ones: they must be appealed to through motives and feelings they can understand, before they can be led up to those which at first they could not understand. It was necessary to insist long and earnestly upon monotheism before the mystery of the Trinity could be safely taught. It is, therefore, possible that what at first sight seems to belong to the faulty

conceptions of the human writers of the Bible may really be a part of the progressive divine teaching. As far as yet considered, indeed, it might belong to either ; and since the growing capacity of man for higher and purer revelation is parallel with his actually higher and purer conception of God, we might be uncertain to which of them to refer this progress. It is necessary, then, to inquire if these imperfect revelations have any characteristics which indisputably bespeak a divine origin. There need be no difficulty in finding them.

One of the most striking features in the Scriptural representation of the Divine Being from first to last, and all along with these anthropomorphic representations, is, that no man shall see God and live ; that He dwells in light which no man can approach unto ; that He is not a man that He should repent, but that with Him is neither variableness nor shadow of turning ; that no man by searching can find Him out ; and many like expressions. Such teaching, although it becomes clearer as man became better educated to receive it, is yet scattered through books by the most various writers, and at great distances of time, and makes it plain that anthropomorphic representations are also used in them only as of necessity, and for man's sake. That there might be no real misunderstanding, the

declarations just mentioned are interspersed with these representations, showing as clearly as the language of any modern philosophy that the Scriptures understood God, in His absolute essence, to be unknowable and unapproachable by his creature. Now, this was not a doctrine of human invention. In the philosophies of antiquity it appears only in their profoundest treatises, never in popular teaching; and it does not appear at all until long ages after it had been announced in the Scriptures. Moreover, it never appears with the fullness and distinctness of enunciation which it has in the Bible. Here, then, is the clear mark of a divine source, — the sign-manual of more than human knowledge; and this is so interwoven with the other representations that they cannot be disentangled. Thus the doubt is solved, and what might otherwise have been considered as the result of human imperfection is shown to be the effect of divine condescension. This class of errors, then, like those which have gone before, are in no other sense really errors than as they are imperfect representations of the truth, adapted to the wants and capacities of those to whom they were given; and at the same time they are so connected with other statements as to show that there was a limitation put on the expression of the human notions of the writer, so that he was to teach, on

the whole, what was beyond the reach of merely human thought.

There is another kind of alleged error, of a more technical kind, which must be considered here, that it may not be in the way farther on. There are frequently in the different books duplicate accounts of the same transaction, and these do not always agree; and there is sometimes in a later book a quotation or a reference which does not, at least upon its face, answer exactly to the original. Such divergences are often disposed of by the remark that they arise simply from the individualities of the writers, their differences of recollection, their habits of mind, their misunderstandings of what they read, and their mental prepossessions; just as similar divergences are seen in the testimony of conscientious witnesses in our courts of justice, or in varying reports of conversation or of public addresses. It is certainly unnecessary to eliminate this human mould of the Scriptures altogether. It constitutes, *e. g.*, one of the peculiar charms of the fourfold portraiture of our Lord in the Gospels. It is important, nevertheless, to know its limits; it is important to know if actual errors, even in matters of secondary importance, do occur, so that we cannot be better assured of the truth of the casual statements of the Bible than of those of other historians; or whether,

whatever be the individual coloring of the narrative, we can yet rely upon every positive statement of the sacred books as absolutely true. In other words, the question here comes up, as in other cases, whether these alleged errors are due to the imperfect knowledge and faulty ideas of the human writers, or whether inspiration has so watched over and guarded them that they have been restrained from any even trivial misstatements. It is, of course, impossible to examine here all debatable passages. Only a few of the more vexed and difficult cases can be selected as examples of the whole.

The general principle in the comparison of seemingly inconsistent accounts in ancient documents is the same as is now observed in regard to testimony in any modern court of justice,—before pronouncing either of them false, it is to be seen whether there is not some rational and likely hypothesis in regard to the circumstances which will bring both accounts into harmony. Or, if this fails, it is to be asked whether each witness must not have been aware of the facts stated by the other, and yet, without other motive than a desire to tell the truth, has given a different version of them. In the latter case there is reason to suppose that both are true, although at our distance from the events we cannot suggest any hypothesis which will bring

them into consistency. The discrepancies between the evangelists have so long attracted attention that little need be said of them. Especially in regard to the varying accounts of the resurrection of our Lord, long the stalking horse of infidelity, it is worth while to remember that West, a few generations ago, undertook to demonstrate from his deistical standpoint the falsity of the Gospels, by showing their absolute inconsistency in this narrative; he examined them with a clear head and an honest heart, and the result was his famous treatise on the resurrection, and his own conversion into a Christian believer.

We select, as one of the most apparently contradictory narratives, the healing of the blind man, or men, near Jericho. It has long been recognized that there is no real difficulty here, as in several other cases in the mention of *two* blind men by one of the evangelists (Matt. xx. 30), while the others (Mark x. 46; Luke xviii. 35) speak only of the one, Bartimæus, who especially attracted attention. But both Matthew and Mark expressly say that the event occurred when they had departed from Jericho, while Luke is equally definite in saying that it was when Jesus was drawing near to the city (*ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἰεριχών*). All attempts to explain the latter phrase as meaning only *while they*

*were near* must be given up as strained and unsupported by usage. But it is altogether likely that our Lord on this journey spent several days at Jericho, and that, as was His custom at Jerusalem, and is still the common custom in visiting Eastern cities, He slept in the country, and came daily into the city. This supposition, which is not only possible, but in itself probable, removes the whole difficulty. Matthew and Mark speak of the miracle as wrought when He had gone out from the city; Luke, more particularly, as exactly when He was entering it again on His morning return. The various records of Peter's denials of his Master, and other seeming discrepancies, are all brought into accord by even more simple suppositions; but this one example must here suffice. An intelligent exegesis, seeking harmony, will always find it without strain.

In the citation of the Old Testament it is by no means necessary to suppose that the New Testament writers *always* intended to quote it according to its original meaning. Their minds were full of its language, and it was natural for them to express what they had to say, just as men do now, in terms with which they had been familiar from childhood, without a thought that the passage had originally the application given to it in their quotation. They would also sometimes see an application of what had been said

of events long gone by to occurrences of their own time too *à propos* to pass unnoticed, just as is done in our own day; and in such cases they might very well introduce their application by saying, “It has come to pass according as it is written,” or “Thus was the Scripture fulfilled,” without imagining that the old Scripture itself looked to any such application. Passages of this kind, however, are fewer than is sometimes supposed, and the common sense of mankind is sufficient to deal with them.

There are many passages of the Old Testament also cited argumentatively, and it is alleged that in some of these the argument is faulty through a misinterpretation of the quotation. These will be considered presently, in connection with alleged errors of reasoning. Meantime there are several quotations with which fault is found on other grounds.

Perhaps the most classic instances are in the speech of Stephen (Acts vii.). In discussing these it is to be remembered who he was, — “a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost” and “of power,” and of a wisdom that his adversaries could not resist (Acts vi. 5-10). He was familiar with the history of his people, and spoke to an audience fully competent and well disposed to trip him up in any slip. His object was not to instruct them in their history, but to prove

from its familiar facts that they sinned in rejecting Jesus as their Messiah. Under these circumstances, it is in the highest degree unlikely that he would have made any errors. If any statements appear to us wrong, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, the presumption is strong that Stephen knew more about the facts than we do. Yet this presumption is only *a priori*; the facts must be taken as they are. Almost his first statement is, that God called Abraham “when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran”; and, accordingly, the English Bible reads, in Gen. xii. 1: “Now the Lord *had said* unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country,” etc.; but the critics say that this is an incorrect translation, made for the purpose of bringing the passage into accord with Stephen. We doubt this. The Hebrew certainly does not express the pluperfect, because it has no form for that tense, and must depend upon the context for its indication. We think such indication is found here, especially in the mention of the country and kindred and father’s house which Abram was to leave, and which were certainly not left in Haran; and hence we consider the English Bible right in its translation.<sup>1</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> The following instances in which the imperfect with **ל** bears a pluperfect sense are at least worthy of consideration: Gen. ii. 19; xxvi. 18; xxxi. 34; xli. 21; Ex. xxxiii. 5; Judg. i. 8; ii. 6; 1 Sam. xiv. 24; xxviii. 3; 2 Sam. xiv. 33; Isa. xxxviii. 21, 22; xxxix. 1.

waiving this, there is a distinct statement in Gen. xv. 7 : “ I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees,” so that Stephen had good authority for what he said. A more serious difficulty is found a little further on, where he states (ver. 16) that the twelve patriarchs were buried “ in the sepulchre that *Abraham* bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father of Sychem.*” Now, we know that Abraham bought a cave for a sepulchre at Mamre, but Joseph and his brethren were not buried there ; we know, also, that *Jacob* bought a piece of land of the sons of Hamor near Shechem, and Joseph was buried there. Is it possible that Stephen, in the haste of his utterance, mixed the two facts, and attributed to Abraham the purchase which belonged to Jacob ? We think not ; because, in all probability, Abraham was the original purchaser of the same land afterwards purchased by Jacob, and this fact was known to Stephen. The evidence is as follows : The land about Shechem was already occupied (Gen. xii. 6, 7) when Abraham built an altar there. There were but three ways in which he could have done this : he must either have built it on the Shechemites’ land, by their sufferance — an unlikely procedure for Abraham, and one giving no security for the sacredness of the altar ; or he must have taken it by violence, which is improbable in the

extreme ; or, finally, he must have purchased it, which it is reasonable to suppose he did. A century or more afterwards Jacob came to the same place, and also wished to build an altar, presumably on the site of his grandfather's. But the land being occupied, this field would not have been left so long idle, and Jacob doubtless found it in some one's possession. If he would reclaim it, it must be either by his sword, or by a fresh purchase. No one familiar with Jacob's character can doubt his choice, and his purchase is recorded. The facts, however, make it probable that Abraham had purchased it before, and hence that Stephen was right.<sup>1</sup> Some other minor points in this speech, which cannot be considered here, are satisfactorily solved, if carefully considered. The two noticed, which are the most difficult, may serve for examples of all.

There are also inaccuracies in the New Testament quotations from the Old. When these do not affect the substance of the quotation it is

<sup>1</sup> The more common solution of this difficulty — that Abraham in Acts vii. 16, is an erroneous reading for Jacob — is not here taken into view, partly because there is no external evidence for it, and conjectural emendations are hazardous; and partly because the ellipsis *τοῦ Συχέμ* as it stands in the *text. rec.* would not admit of being supplied (as it is in the A. V.) by *πατήρ*; while the better reading is *ἐν Συχέμ*. The person of whom Jacob purchased appears to have been a different person from the one of whom Abraham purchased, though having the same patronymic.

enough to say that, as the case may be, the quotation is from the Septuagint, the version in common use, without stopping to criticise it, or is freely translated from the original, or even sometimes is loosely quoted from memory. But there are cases in which the Septuagint is quoted when it differs in an important point from the original. The most striking instance is in the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 5) : “Sacrifice and burnt-offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” It is notorious that the word “body” is not in the original, and is quoted in the Septuagint. If this were an unimportant word, it would attract no attention, because it would not have been worth the writer’s while to go out of the way to correct it; but as the discourse is of Christ’s atonement, at first sight this word seems very important. But a closer examination shows that the whole stress of the passage and the whole argument from the quotation rests upon Christ’s having come to do the Father’s will. The contrast is drawn between the imperfect way of removing sins by the sacrifices of old, and the perfect way through Christ’s obedience. The word “body” was so entirely immaterial to the argument that when, in summing up, the quotation is repeated to clinch the conclusion, it is without the clause containing this word.

This instance closely connects itself with alleged errors of reasoning. Our Lord himself and His apostles also reason largely from the Old Testament. This is the only authority which Christ recognizes at all; and while He subordinates even this to His own teaching, He yet bases arguments upon its language, and positively declares, “One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” The apostles everywhere assume that the Old Testament was accepted as a matter of course with Christianity; and even with heathen converts (as, *e. g.*, the Galatians) they reason from Old Testament types and shadows to Christian verities. It is asserted that some of this reasoning is illogical and inconsequential, is fashioned after the rabbinical methods of argument, and is a clear case of the human element, unrestrained and uncontrolled, coming to the surface in the word of God.

A full answer to this allegation could only be made by a careful examination of every passage by which it is thought to be sustained. This is impossible within our limits; but, as in other cases, a few of the more difficult instances may be taken as examples of the rest. The arguments in question are chiefly in the Epistles of Paul, and in that to the Hebrews. It is admitted that the writer was an intelligent man, gifted

with no small degree of logical acumen. His main arguments, too, are powerful, and generally convincing. The question is about some minor details, which were satisfactory enough to his contemporaries, but which are now criticised as resting upon a faulty exegesis of the passages quoted, while the reasoning based upon them is said to savor of rabbinical subtlety, rather than of manly and fair argument. These are sometimes defended on the ground of the lawfulness of the *argumentum ad hominem*; but this is hardly satisfactory. Either the reasoning must be shown to be fair, and based upon sound premises, or else it must be recognized as the result of the imperfection of the human writers, which inspiration has not controlled sufficiently to prevent the introduction of error into the Scriptures. The latter alternative may seem, at first sight, the easier; but we are not entitled to adopt it until some case can be pointed out in which it is clearly required. The *a priori* presumption must always be against it in books which confessedly contain so much of the divine teaching. The most frequently cited instances are one in the Epistle to the Hebrews and two in that to the Galatians. If all these are found to be sound arguments, without the aid of rabbinical casuistry, other alleged instances will still more readily yield before a fair and careful examination.

The case referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews is that in which the superiority of the Melchisedecan to the Aaronic priesthood is shown by Abraham's payment of tithes to Melchisedec (Heb. vii. 4-10). The argument here is this: All spiritual authority is from God, and there can be no disturbance of the relations He has established. He gave certain blessings and privileges to Melchisedec, and also certain ones to Abraham and his descendants. The relation which existed between these two must continue in after ages to be the relation between those who draw their authority from them respectively. Now, Abraham recognized the spiritual superiority of Melchisedec; therefore the spiritual authority of the priesthood derived from Melchisedec must be superior to that derived from Abraham. Incidentally, the author remarks, "And (as I may so say) Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him;" but this is an illustration, not an argument, and even as illustration is qualified by the "as I may so say." The assumption of a fallacy here rests upon the supposition that the argument culminates in this clause; whereas it is complete without it, except as this points the fact that Levi was descended from Abraham. The only flaw in the argument as it stands is

met by the author a little further on. It might be that the Levitical priesthood, being expressly established by God, had received a higher authority than belonged to the spiritual position of Abraham, and thus have been raised even above that of Melechisedec. The apostle shows elaborately that this was not the case, and his argument remains intact.

The two cases in Galatians may be taken in the order in which they occur. In the first (iii. 15, 16) Paul argues that the promise made to Abraham and his *seed*, rather than to his *seeds*, must apply to Christ. The difficulty arises simply from not observing wherein the apostle's argument really lies. Unquestionably the word "seed," whether in Hebrew, Greek, or English, is a collective term, and had the promise to Abraham been meant to be distributed to all his numerous posterity it would still have been couched in the same terms. No sound argument, therefore, can be drawn from the use of the singular rather than the plural; nor is this the apostle's design. He has, indeed, been supposed to argue from this, and therefore to argue fallaciously; but he does not do so. He supposes some things to be known to his readers, and among them the nature of the promise to Abraham. The primeval promise to fallen man was that the seed of the woman should bruise

the serpent's head, that, in the long struggle with the power of evil, one born of woman should at last win the victory. Upon this promise was based the hope of every God-fearing man through the long ages of corruption that followed ; and from time to time, as at the birth of Cain and of Noah, this hope found definite expression. Its realization had been still deferred ; and when Abraham was told that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, he must have understood it meant that the promised Redeemer should be born of his line. Throughout, this expectation was that of a personal Redeemer. Trench well says, “No thoughtful student of the past records of mankind can refuse to acknowledge that through all its history there has been the hope of a redemption from the evil which oppresses it ; nor of this only, but that this hope has continually linked itself on to some single man. The help that is coming to the world, it has ever seen incorporated in a person.”<sup>1</sup> It is to this promise that Paul refers, and it is from the nature of this promise that he argues. The promise, he says, was not to the posterity of Abraham generally, but to this one, this Redeemer, who is Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Trench, *Hulsean Lectures*, 1846, Lecture ii., p. 28. See this passage treated more at length in a “Note on Gal. iii. 16,” in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1879, p. 23.

To express compactly and tersely his meaning, he uses the words, “ He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” His argument is not drawn from the word, but from the nature of the promise ; and that nature of the promise he expresses, as the most compact and convenient way, by the singular and plural of the word “ seed.”

The other case is that of the beautiful allegory from the history of Hagar and Sarah and their descendants, used by Paul to set forth the relations of Jews and Gentiles under the Gospel (Gal. iv. 21–31). It is alleged that the apostle, under the influence of his rabbinical education, has here been guilty of founding an important argument upon what should have been a mere illustration. Paul was undoubtedly a man who made all his human acquisitions tell to the advancement of his Master’s cause, and frequently brings the familiar story of the Old Testament to the enforcement and illustration of gospel truth (as in 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10 ; x. 1–11, etc.) ; but the precise question here is, — and this is important in its bearing on the general subject, — whether he does this after the rabbinical fashion of subtle and inconsequential argument, or whether the tendency to this, which might have been expected from his education, is so overruled and controlled by the Spirit of inspi-

ration as to allow of his using only arguments which are really sound and forcible. None can doubt the appropriateness of the references here, and in other places, as illustrations. It is plain, too, that they have force as arguments to this extent—that when it has been already shown that parties under the gospel occupy the same relations as other parties did under the law, then what is predicated of those relations in the one case will hold good in the other also. This is precisely what is done in the passage before us. There was in the old time a child of nature and a child of promise, and under the gospel there is the same. The child of nature of old was the child of the bondmaid, and followed his mother's condition ; and the same is true now ; the Jew is the child of Abraham by nature, and is under the bondage of the law to which he was born. The child of promise was by the free-woman, and answers to those who come into the gospel covenant by promise, and not by natural descent, and are therefore free from the law. Paul, recognizing the historical truth of the events to which he refers, says that they truly represent—as they certainly do—the relation between mere natural inheritance and inheritance by promise, and shows that this is the very relation between Jews and Christians under the gospel. He then draws from this relation a

forcible and legitimate argument. There seems to be here no ground for a charge of error. There is also a minor point objected to in the incidental statement that a local name of Mount Sinai was Hagar, of which sufficient external evidence is wanting; but Paul had himself been on the ground, and his assertion is quite as trustworthy as that of any other traveler, and, moreover, does not at all affect his argument.

The part of this whole subject most perplexing to some minds is in what is considered the faulty morality, particularly of the older parts of the Old Testament. Polygamy, slavery, revenge, the punishment of the innocent for the sin of the guilty, the extermination of whole nations — and that too in bloody wars — by the hands of the chosen people, the success of Jacob's deceit, the praise of Jael's perfidy, — these are among the things which strike strangely on the Christian's ear, and seem inconsistent with the character of an All-holy God. Do these, indeed, come from the divine source of the Scriptures, or are they the teachings of men enlightened only to the standard of the times in which they lived? Many things are narrated in the Bible simply as historical facts, for the morality of which it is in no way responsible. Immoral acts, also, are sometimes recorded of the saints, such as Abraham's deceit

or Peter's denial of his Master, and should be eliminated from the discussion, because the Scriptures in no way commend them, even where they do not openly denounce them. Other evils, like polygamy, though always opposed to God's will, as our Lord shows from the narrative of creation itself, "were suffered for the hardness of men's hearts" among a people yet unable to bear a higher morality; yet the evil was mitigated and restrained as far as was practicable at the time. So also was slavery. The law was unable to forbid it; even Christianity did not directly do this; but the old dispensation in every possible way modified and reduced its evils. After these things have been said, however, there remains much that seems dark and inexplicable. The *lex talionis* of the Pentateuch was not merely permissive but obligatory. "Thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deut. xix. 21). How shall this be reconciled with the gospel law of returning love for hatred, and good deeds for evil? Because the condition of the people required such commands, in order that they might thereby be made fit for a higher standard. Principles of justice must be implanted in the mind as a necessary basis for those of love. The monsters of the Carboniferous era must precede the develop-

ment of life in the Tertiary, and that in turn must prepare the way for the age of Man; yet to Him who ordered the earth from the beginning those Carboniferous monsters were good in their day, and we now see no unfitness in their formation under the guiding hand of Him who was leading our earth on to a higher state. So in the spiritual development of our race, as far as we can judge, it was necessary that God should govern man according to his capacities, and give him laws suited to his condition. Only thus could he be advanced to a higher standard; only by impressing on a lawless people, given to unbridled license of revenge, a sense of exact justice and of the rights of others could they be prepared for a higher teaching.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it is to be remembered that higher principles were everywhere embodied in the law for such as were able to receive them. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18) was a precept of Leviticus, as well as of the gospel. These considerations, fairly applied to the circumstances, will account for what otherwise may seem strange and anomalous in the law.

But why should the people who were thus to be trained to better things have been made the executors of God's wrath, thereby accustoming

<sup>1</sup> See, on this subject, Mozley, *Ruling Ideas in the Early Ages*.

them to deeds of savage cruelty, and teaching them to imbrue their hands with the blood of defenseless women and unweaned children, as well as with that of the warrior? Why, too, in the judgments upon individual offenders, as Dathan and Abiram, or Achan, should sentence have been executed also upon their innocent wives and little ones? The answer to both these and other like questions is essentially the same. Men always have stood, and they still stand, not merely in an individual, but also in a federal, relation to God. This is plain everywhere under what is called God's natural government of the world. People suffer or prosper according to the acts of their rulers; families are affected by the conduct of their head; children inherit not merely the fortunes, but the idiosyncrasies of their parents. Why the world should have been so constituted we cannot here inquire; but the fact is plain; and if revelation came from the same Author as nature we must expect to find in it the same general features. The institution of the Christian church is one great example of it; and whatever blessing, whatever grace comes to the individual by its instrumentality is in consequence of the federal relation in which the believer, over and above his individual relation, stands to his Master. So strong was this relation of old that the prophet could say (Num.

xxiii. 21): God “hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel,” at the very time when He was punishing tens of thousands among them for their gross and outrageous sins. This federal relation was stronger and relatively more important in ancient than in modern times. The progress of revelation has always tended to bring out the individual more clearly as he stands by himself before God, and although the federal relation still exists, it is of much less relative importance than formerly. Anciently, nations existed chiefly as nations, and families as families, and men understood little of any other relation. They looked upon a nation as an organic whole, and upon a family as an appurtenance and possession of its head. When, then, a nation, as the Amalekites or Canaanites, had arrayed itself as a whole against the church of God, how was it to be dealt with? The divine judgment, to have any value, must be made intelligible alike to friends and foes. Men could distinguish but little between the individual and the nation of which he was a part. Sometimes there might be such a striking instance of faith as that of Rahab, when it became possible to spare the individual<sup>1</sup> in the destruction of the doomed city; but generally, if the divine judgment was

<sup>1</sup> But even so, her whole family must be spared with her.

to be effective, to make an impression, to establish God's government of the world, it must be sweeping and comprehensive. The Israelites could not have understood that God was very seriously displeased with Achan, except his family also were involved in the same sentence. They could not have believed in the divine detestation of the sins of the Canaanites, unless it had been commanded that the whole people should be utterly swept away. In this case there was the further object of removing all contaminating influences from the one people upon earth whose vocation it was to keep alive the knowledge of the true God.<sup>1</sup>

But these commands are sometimes coupled with an appeal to lower motives which look like the mere outcome of hereditary revenge. God says to Saul (1 Sam. xv. 2, 3), "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel. . . . Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have. . . . Slay both man and woman, infant and sucking." In the light of what has been said, it may be possible to explain the necessity for the destruction of Amalek; but why should an appeal be made for this purpose to the hereditary national sentiment of revenge? We can only answer that man is of a mixed

<sup>1</sup> See Arnold's Sermons, vi. 35-37, quoted by Stanley in *Jewish Church*, vol. i., p. 283.

nature ; and God, in leading him to do His will, has always appealed, and still appeals, not only to the highest motives of love and duty and gratitude, but also to self-interest and gain. As we are constituted, such appeals are a help to us, even now in the full sunlight of the gospel, in our heavenward path, with which we could not dispense ; how much more to those in their spiritual infancy in the dim twilight of the law. Even here, however, the appeal is not to revenge for personal injuries, but to revenge for injuries inflicted long generations ago upon their people as the church of God.

It is always to be remembered, moreover, that these judgments in which the innocent were involved with the guilty were purely temporal in their character, like the consequences to the ship's company now of the carelessness of the engineer, and have nothing to do with rewards or punishments beyond the grave. It may have been that the wife of Dathan was received into paradise, or that some of the children of Rahab received the doom of the impenitent. These judgments may be likened to the earthquake which cuts off all the inhabitants of a city, good and bad alike.

Still, it is asked, why should the Israelites have been made the instruments of these judgments, which accustomed the chosen people to

deeds of cruelty and blood, instead of punishing the rest of the Canaanites, as Sodom and Gomorrah had been punished, by direct divine interposition? A single example may help to explain this. When Joshua called upon the captains of the men of war to plant their feet upon the necks of the prostrate kings of Canaan (Josh. x. 24), the act seems to our Christian apprehension like one of wanton insult to a prostrate foe; but to one at all able to enter into the spirit of the times it will be seen in its true light, as a necessary means of raising the courage of the chosen people, and teaching them not to tremble before the might of the idolatrous heathen whom they were to supplant. And, in general, the lesson of God's anger against Canaanitish sin could in no other way have been so impressed upon the Israelites as by making them the actual executioners of His wrath. With the strong tendency to heathen abominations that they constantly displayed, it would seem that, but for the personal impression thus produced, there would have been no restraining them at all. We do not find that the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah ever had any marked moral effect upon their neighbors.

These thoughts lead to the more sweeping charge that, from Abraham down through all their history, the Israelites are represented in

the Bible as the especial favorites of the Almighty, and whoever interferes with them, no matter if he is right and they are wrong, is yet doomed to feel the vengeance of the Omnipotent. It is said that this is just what is found in the legends of every ancient people, and gives good ground for looking upon the Scripture records as largely the human story of a nation who imagined themselves the especial favorites of heaven. This is simply a question of fact. Were these tribes really in such a peculiar relation to God that they should have been treated differently from other people? There can be but one answer to this, if the general course of history as set forth in the Scriptures is received at all. Men had increased in wickedness as fast as in numbers. The race had been wiped from the face of the earth by the flood, and a fresh population developed from the only righteous family. Even this was ineffectual; nor was the confusion of tongues more successful. Man tended too rapidly to moral degeneracy to be restrained by any universal discipline. Then a particular individual was selected to become, with his descendants, the depositary of divine truth. He was trained as a childless wanderer for long years, and his son also in the same way. Not until the third generation was any multiplication allowed; and then, when the family

was growing to be a nation, it was brought into bondage, and schooled for generations, first under the rigors of a servile condition, then in the free air of the desert, and was placed under a law of minute detail and of severe penalty. It is plain, therefore, that in God's dealings with these patriarchs and their descendants He would rightly have had regard, even more than to them individually, to the part they were called to play in the furtherance of His purposes, and in the preparation for that great fact in the world's history, the coming of the Redeemer. Jacob, *e. g.*, was promised the birth-right, and would in any event have received it. He actually obtained it by fraud, and for this was punished by long years of exile and many sorrows ; but he was allowed to retain the birth-right, because this was a step in the world's progress to Christ. His descendants were again and again told that God's favor to them was not for their own sake, for they were a "stiff-necked and rebellious people," but for the sake of God's great name. Their sins are continually recorded, as well as their punishments. All this is unknown in the legends of other ancient people ; there is nothing in ancient history like it. If these were human records, they would be like others. Because they are not, and because as a matter of fact the Israelites had been made the

peculiar people of God to facilitate His purposes of love in the redemption of mankind, therefore this partiality for them must be attributed not to the imagination of the human writers, but to the divine revelation itself.

In regard to the so-called faulty morality of the Old Testament, we select the most difficult case to serve as an example. In the great war between Israel and their oppressor, although Jabin's army had been routed, there could be no security against a recurrence of the oppression as long as his general, Sisera, lived. The Kenites occupied a neutral position between the two parties, on friendly terms with both, yet always, on the whole, attached to Israel. Under these circumstances the fugitive Sisera sought refuge in the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, and was received with every demonstration of cordiality and friendship. But when the tired warrior had fallen asleep in fancied security, she slew him and showed his dead body exultingly to the pursuing Israelites. History has instances enough of similar treachery; but the peculiarity of this is that the deed is especially commended in the song of the inspired prophetess, Deborah. She not merely rejoices in the result, but declares Jael as "blessed above women" for having done the deed. It is plain that the act of Jael was considered by her con-

temporaries as most praiseworthy. They had not yet risen to a moral condition in which they could be shocked at its treachery ; they saw in it only the brave deed of a woman who had faith enough in the God of Israel to dare the wrath of the oppressors, and by one act to destroy the nerve and strength of Israel's enemy. The commendation of Deborah, in the midst of this state of moral childhood, may be regarded, in itself, either as a mistaken human commendation of an essentially wrong act, or as a divine commendation of a zeal for God and a trust in Him, although this showed itself forth according to the light of the times. It is so difficult to transport ourselves in thought into times far different from our own that the former has often seemed the easier alternative ; yet there can be no question of the general principle that God does commend men, in our time and in all times, for zealous and brave activity in His service according to the best light and knowledge they can command, even when it afterwards proves that their views were mistaken. This, of course, does not justify wrong deeds when those who do them *might* know better ; but in Jael's case, and in others of that time, the opportunity for such better knowledge was wanting. They acted according to their light, even as we now, with a clear conscience and with the

approbation of our fellow-men, do many things which in a higher stage of existence may be seen to have been wrong. Yet we reasonably expect our heavenly Father to judge such acts in view of our imperfect knowledge and of the spirit which animated them. It was in the same way that the act of Jael was commended. She knew no better, and served God with courage and zeal according to the light she had.<sup>1</sup> May we never do worse.

The unrighteous acts of several of the judges bring out another important fact. Samson loved strange women; Ehud treacherously assassinated Eglon; and many like deeds were done by men expressly “ raised up by the Lord ” for the deliv-

<sup>1</sup> Great stress is sometimes laid upon the fact that Jael murdered Sisera after feeding him, thus violating the universal oriental law of hospitality. Hence it is argued that she must have known of the immorality of her act. The answer is obvious, that, so far as this point is concerned, she could not have known of it, for there was no immorality about it. This law of protection to the guest is a mere custom of necessity in a state of society which has no other bond of coherence. It has no moral character about it; but is merely intended to furnish the possibility of some protection to life. He who violates it, attacks the only safeguard for life in the community and therefore exposes himself to the vengeance of the whole community, not because his act is considered immoral, but because it is looked upon as dangerous. Jael showed her zeal in braving even this danger of making herself an outlaw whose life would be at the mercy of every one she met.

erance of Israel, and at times when "the Spirit of the Lord" had especially come upon them. How could these things be? In a less conspicuous way, the same thing happens now. Men are providentially raised up, and go forth, moved by God's Spirit, to do good in their day and generation. Nevertheless, in their human weakness and infirmity of judgment, they often do many foolish and hurtful things. Shall it be said that the Lord prompted them to do these things? By no means. He prompted them to do good, but left the manner of the doing to the exercise of their own faculties. So God prompted the judges to deliver Israel, but left the manner of it to themselves; and they, in the moral darkness in which they were, took counsel perhaps of their passions, or at least of their prejudices and misconceptions of the right. These acts themselves were often severely punished. Samson's guilty love led to his imprisonment and death, and Jephthah's rash vow turned into bitter mourning the very hour of his victory. But there is no error in the statement that they were "raised up by the Lord," or that they acted under the impulse of His Spirit. The mistake is in supposing that this impulse guided them to acts which were really determined by their own erring judgment.

The more general question recurs: Why should

men have been kept so long under the tutelage of an imperfect system, and have been taught such incomplete morality, that they could do these abominable things, either with a clear conscience, or at least without adequate sense of their wrong? Why should not a higher standard have been set before them so clearly that they must have recognized polygamy and slavery, murder, revenge, and deceit, as in direct opposition to God's holy will? Because they were not able to receive or understand a higher standard. The slowness of development of the human faculties in the race, as in the individual, is something in proportion to their value. Physical prowess and skill is earlier and more easily acquired than intellectual, and intellectual than moral. *Character* is the hardest and the slowest thing in its formation. There were always sufficient indications of God's will in His revelation, if men had been able to see them. The same dispensation which tolerated polygamy recorded that "at first God made them male and female"; the same law which required an eye for an eye also commanded, "Thou shalt not avenge." (Lev. xix. 18.) Under the education of this law a fair-minded man could see, when it was pointed out to him, that its two great commandments, embracing all others, were a supreme love to God, and an equal love to one's

neighbor with himself. This is the sum of all morality, and this is the acknowledged sum of the teaching of the old dispensation ; but to the recognition of this mankind must be trained, like children, little by little, and imperfect commands must be given until they were able to rise to better. Men were very wicked, and “the law was added because of transgressions, until the promised Seed should come ” and bring out the higher morality and spirituality which all along lay hidden under its temporary educational provisions. In all this there is nothing to show that this imperfect law was the out-growth of the ideas of its human writers ; if it had been, it would not have been possible to trace a higher law beneath it, and it would not have been “our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.” Since it is marked by these characteristics, there is but one tenable conclusion : It was divinely given to prepare men of dull spiritual apprehension for a higher and better law ready to be revealed in its time.

There are no other classes of alleged error in the Scriptures requiring especial notice. The treatment of the subject is necessarily incomplete ; because the force of an inductive argument depends upon an examination of all the facts, and this is impossible here. But the aim has been throughout to take the most difficult

facts; and if these do not sustain the theory that the Bible is untrustworthy in certain directions, because of the erroneous views of its human writers, there are no others which can do so. It has been attempted to show that all these so-called errors are at least consistent with the hypothesis that they proceed from the Divine Source of the Scriptures, and in many cases are so inextricably involved with what must belong to that Source that no other hypothesis is tenable. The consideration of the subject would be incomplete, however, without mention of the way in which the Scriptures themselves treat the question.

Our Lord continually refers to them as absolutely reliable and true. He speaks of various details in them as of "Scriptures which cannot be broken." He quotes even incidental passages as conclusive in argument. As already said, they are the only authority to which He defers, and yet He defers to them in their minutest points; while at the same time He unfolds in them a previously unknown richness and depth of spiritual truth. There are points where He has occasion to change their teaching, as, *e. g.*, in regard to the law of divorce; but even there He shows that He only restores the original will of His Father, and He proves what that will was by the same Scriptures. He rec-

ognizes that God had suffered that will to be in abeyance for a time, because of the hardness of men's hearts ; but He treats the law, thus suffered to be imperfect, as not from man, but from God. He shows, indeed, that much of the older Scriptures came to its intended result in Himself and His teaching, and had no farther force ; but this fulfillment, so far from proving them human, shows their divine character all the more clearly, in that, from the hoar ages of antiquity, they had looked forward to and prepared for His coming.

His apostles, beyond all question, regarded the Scriptures in the same way. No particular passage, admitting of any doubtful interpretation, need be referred to. The view taken throughout the Acts and the Epistles is plain beyond any possibility of doubt. The Scriptures are everywhere appealed to as of authority in small matters, as well as in great. Their histories are regarded as authentic in every particular ; their precepts are made the foundation of Christian teaching ; their prophecies are treated as evidence of Christian truth ; and their moral teaching is abundantly urged on Christian disciples. We suppose that no one, whatever may be his own view, can fail to recognize, if he look fairly at the question, that the New Testament writers believed the Scriptures *to be* the word of

God, rather than simply *to contain* it. This belief we have tried to show was justified by the facts; and if so, certain important consequences follow.

First, in regard to the theory of inspiration. If the Bible is thoroughly true and reliable (not taking into account mere copyists' errors), then, making allowance only for such imperfect statements of the truth or such imperfect commands as were required by the condition of the men to whom it was given, we have before us this prodigy: that during the lapse of many centuries a number of writers, of different personal character and of every variety of culture and position, writing with such freedom that their idiosyncrasies are plainly to be seen, and unhesitatingly touching upon every subject that came in their way — historical, ethnological, archæological, scientific, and moral — have been preserved from error. This result could not have had place in writings of human origin. Is there any other logical conclusion from this, than that, whatever else be or be not the function of inspiration, its scope included the preservation of the Bible from error, and the giving to man of a book on which he may rely absolutely as the word of God?

Finally, in regard to exegesis. The interpretation of Scripture is an easy matter, if the interpreter may refer everything that seems

troublesome to the mistake of the human writer, treating it as of no consequence because he thinks it does not interfere with the essential office of God's word as the teacher of religious duty. If, however, the interpreter must accept all Scripture as given by inspiration of God, allowing only for the coloring of the various human writers and for unavoidable error in the transmission of their writings, he has a different task before him. He must interpret not only in view of the opinions of the individual writers, but also according to the infinite knowledge and truth which lay behind them, and which exercised over them an indescribable but potent influence. And he must do this not by subtleties and technicalities, but by open and manly treatment of the text before him. We do not deny that this requires thought and study, and a familiarity with the conditions under which revelation in its various parts was given, and the circumstances, character, and spiritual apprehensions of the people to whom it was given. But the study of the Scriptures under these conditions will more than repay the labor required, and will, we believe, lead to the ever firmer and firmer conviction that they are in very truth **THE WORD OF GOD.**

The following treatise upon the principles of Interpretation is based upon the position here maintained.

## PART I.

### THE PREPARATION FOR INTERPRETING

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### PRELIMINARY.

ON taking into our hands the English Bible we find it bound up in one volume labeled, "The Holy Bible," and we know that it has always been regarded with peculiar reverence as set apart and distinguished from all other books. On opening its covers it professes on its title-page to be a translation, and this fact at once refers us to its original languages as necessary for the full understanding of its contents. On looking within, it is seen to have a diversity, as being composed of two main divisions, the Old and the New Testaments ; and on further examination, each of these is seen to be made up of a number of separate books written by different persons, at widely different times, and with different immediate purposes. These are the fundamental facts underlying any principles of interpretation.

Let us look first at its diversity. It contains history. About one third of the Old Testament is made up of historical narrative, most of it anonymously written, but assigned on various grounds to a succession of authors extending over a space of more than a thousand years, while considerable portions of the prophetical books are also occupied with historical matter. This history is both oriental and extremely primitive in style, dwelling with great minuteness upon certain incidents and passing over in silence many connected events. The history throughout is regarded from the standpoint of the people to which it belonged, with only slight notice of the other nations among which they lived. This history also includes the whole system of legislation, civil and ecclesiastical, of the ancient people of Israel. Of the New Testament more than one half (including the reports of the discourses of our Lord) is historical. Of course, the ordinary canons of historical criticism must be borne in view in the interpretation of these portions of both Testaments, however they may be modified by the peculiar character of the books. The questions of authorship and of date, so far as these can be ascertained, are also important factors in interpretation. The histories of the Old Testament have more the character of chronicles, are duplicated only to a

small extent, and are generally of the nature of compilations, in the case of the book of Genesis at least, from documents of extreme antiquity; the histories of the New Testament, on the other hand, have more the character of memoirs, written either by eyewitnesses or by those who derived their information immediately from eyewitnesses; the Synoptical Gospels are to a large extent parallel narratives, and while these books are also anonymous, their authorship is far more easily determined with certainty.

Outside of the histories the difference between these two parts of the Bible is much greater. All the rest of the New Testament, except the Apocalypse, is made up of letters written by Apostles or Apostolic men to churches or to scattered believers in various parts of the world and on various occasions. These contain doctrinal statements and arguments as well as practical exhortations, with a multitude of individual and historical allusions. A large part of them were written by Paul, and his personal life and character becomes an important element in their interpretation. Some of them are of an earlier date than any of the Gospels. The closing book is of an apocalyptic character, assimilated somewhat to the books of Daniel and Ezekiel, and from its nature is in many parts extremely difficult to interpret. On the other hand, the rest

of the Old Testament falls into two main divisions of not very unequal size, the “poetical books” and the “prophecies,” the former occupying about two fifths and the latter the remainder of that part of the Old Testament not already classed as historical. The poetical books are of varied character. The book of Job contains a short narrative of the remarkable experience of that patriarch, with a prolonged discussion of the Divine government of the world; the book of Psalms, itself by various authors and composed at various times, contains the sacred songs and prayers of the ancient church and of some of its most prominent members; Ecclesiastes, unlike the others, largely in prose, is a philosophical discussion of “the enigma of life;” while the Canticles is a short poetical book of a character peculiarly its own. The remaining books of the Bible contain the writings of a long series of prophets, in several instances contemporary with one another, but, from first to last, extending over a space of four centuries. These books, with some historical portions, are chiefly didactic, but have also, scattered through them, visions and, in some instances, distinct verbal predictions of future events, some near, some looking on to the end of time, but mainly occupied with that which forms the subject of the New Testament, the new covenant of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

From this brief summary it may be seen to how great a diversity of subject, of time, and of writers the principles of Scripture Hermeneutics must apply.

There is also important variety in the languages in which these books were written. The New Testament is in Greek throughout, but in Greek of a late type and modified by an Aramaic speaking people; it has also been influenced by the Greek translation of the Old Testament in common use, known as the Septuagint, which is marked by a peculiar Hellenistic structure. It has, therefore, its dialectic peculiarities, and these are more marked with some of its writers than with others. In addition, the language is necessarily modified by the nature of the subject on which it is employed, since no heathen language could possibly be a sufficient vehicle for the communication of the ideas which Christianity first brought into the world. Its interpretation thus requires not only an accurate knowledge of Greek, but also of its Hellenistic modifications, a familiarity with the facts and the doctrines therein treated, together with the Jewish traditions, customs, and beliefs which the language has been used to express.

The great bulk of the Old Testament is in Hebrew, with a few important passages in Chaldee. The Hebrew fortunately remained remark-

ably fixed during the thousand years in the course of which these books were written, but, nevertheless, it underwent some modification. The fact, however, that there is no other literature in pure Hebrew, and that it had practically become a dead language before the Christian era, leads to some difficulties of interpretation which can only partially be removed by the study of the cognate languages and by familiarity with the history, usages, and habits of thought of other oriental nations.

A further obvious necessity to the exact interpretation of the Scriptures is the settlement of their text. The books of Scripture were transmitted to a comparatively recent date in manuscript, and these manuscripts have become more or less vitiated by the often repeated work of the copyists. New Testament textual criticism is an art requiring especial study, but forms the subject of so many separate treatises that it need scarcely be considered here, although it will be spoken of briefly in a later chapter. Happily, its principles have become so well settled that the text may be considered as generally established, and there remain comparatively few passages of any kind, and still fewer of importance, in which the reading is still in doubt.

The same amount of material does not exist, nor has the same amount of care been as yet ex

pended upon the text of the Old Testament. There are no existing manuscripts of anything like the same relative antiquity ; the versions into other languages have neither been made as near to the date of the original writing, nor, for the most part, with even an approach to the same scrupulous fidelity. To the last remark the Samaritan text and the Samaritan version may be considered as to some extent exceptions ; but these cover only the Pentateuch. Still further, we do not have, as in the case of the New Testament, ample quotations of a date not very far removed from that of the books themselves. On the other hand, it is well known that in the later centuries of their history the Jews guarded the text of their sacred books with a superstitious reverence, counting the words, and religiously preserving even errors which had once been introduced in the form or size of the letters. Nevertheless, on comparing parallel passages, it becomes certain that errors, especially in the statement of numbers, do exist in the present text, and it is a part of the office of the interpreter to determine where, and to what extent, conjectural emendation is admissible. What there is of an *apparatus criticus* for his aid will be spoken of hereafter.

With all these elements of variety, there still exists a marked and substantial unity in the

whole volume of Scripture. It is all God's word, and an attempt has been made in the Introduction to show in what sense that expression is to be understood. There are other books esteemed sacred among people of other religions, which, in some cases, as in that of the Vedas, have been written at long intervals of time, and in these books may be found a certain unity as a necessary result of their national origin and their common religious character ; but they neither have orderly development, nor is there in them any trace of a progressive revelation. The unity of the Bible is very much more than this. It is a unity of plan and purpose in which the end has been seen from the beginning, and all its parts have been adjusted with reference to that end. It is a book divinely given to enable man so to use this present life as to fit him for the life which is to come, and this purpose must always be kept in view as the underlying thought of the whole in every attempt at its interpretation. This purpose, moreover, has been accomplished by the wonderful plan of salvation through a personal Redeemer, who thus becomes the very centre and object of every part. Without the recognition of these facts many parts of the Bible may seem obsolete or useless ; with this clue as a guide, every part is brought into its true harmony and importance.

This fundamental unity at once distinguishes the Bible from all other books, and becomes the leading principle of its interpretation. In passing from the Law to the Gospel, there is a total change in the whole outward religious system; yet there is ample proof that both were parts of one consistent plan, and that the former was designed from the beginning as preparatory for the latter,— that the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

## CHAPTER II.

### GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THERE are necessarily two main parts in any treatise upon the interpretation of the Bible; the first must deal with the qualifications required in the interpreter; the second, with the actual method in the practice of interpretation.

Among the many essential qualifications of the interpreter we place first that of a familiarity with the whole contents of Scripture, and a good general knowledge of its scope and design. This is placed first, not because in an accurate and thorough interpretation it can suffice alone, but because it is of itself of more avail than any other single qualification, and because it is necessary to possess this first in order that other qualifications may have their full value.

With no knowledge of the original languages, with no familiarity with history, or acquaintance with either geography or archæology beyond that furnished by the Scriptures themselves, a person, while he cannot possibly become a thorough exegete, may yet interpret fairly and truthfully by far the greater part of the sacred

record. The Bible has been so often and so well translated, and the English version especially is one of such exceptional excellence, that one cannot fail to gather from it much more than the general scope of the inspired word. There are passages, it is true, sometimes of importance, in which the text has been changed by later critical research ; no scholar would now think of maintaining the genuineness of the testimony of the three heavenly witnesses in 1 John v. 7, and few would contend that the doxology of the Lord's Prayer was a part of the original record. So, also, there are some other passages in which the translation is grievously at fault, as in the sad marring of the glorious Messianic prophecy of Isa. ix. There is, too, beyond all this, very frequently a serious loss in the nicer shades of expression almost inseparable from a translation ; and to these nicer shades the well furnished interpreter must have constant regard. But over and above all this, there is more light to be thrown upon the interpretation of Scripture from a general knowledge of Scripture itself than from any other single source.

When John the Baptist cried “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29), his meaning is to be sought not in any knowledge of the Greek words, for they are perfectly well represented by the Eng-

lish ; nor yet in any especial idiom, for the sentence is entirely simple and easy of construction ; but in the recollection that John was of the priestly family of the old dispensation, and spoke to men familiar with the use of the lamb under that dispensation in connection with the forgiveness of sins. All that is needed for the interpretation of this text is a familiarity with the circumstances of the speaker and with the sacrificial system of the dispensation of which he formed a part. He must have been understood by his hearers to point to Jesus as a propitiation for the sin of the world, and beyond this, in the fuller light of the New Testament revelation, he must be understood by us to have declared our Lord to be the antitype of whom the sacrificial lambs of old were the types and shadows. So if we turn to the primeval promise to fallen man given in the curse upon the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. iii. 15), the explanation must be sought in the story of the Bible itself, to which a knowledge of the original language can bring little additional light. It is plain from the early story of Genesis that this was looked upon as a promise that a man should be born, who would restore to the race the blessings lost by the fall, and it is evident from

the text itself that this was to be accomplished by a struggle in which some injury should be inflicted upon man, while the author of evil should be utterly crushed. This promise appears to have been the hope and stay of the human race during the ages (cf. Gen. iv. 1; v. 29); and thus, when we read later of a promise given to Abram (Gen. xii. 3, etc.) and to his descendants, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, it would seem that it must have been recognized by him and by them as the same primeval promise. As the centuries rolled away we know that an expectation, corresponding to this promise, became general and widespread, even among heathen nations; but it is among the people who were the chosen depositaries of revelation that we must look for the fullest explanation of its meaning. There we find the promise, after being successively restricted to the line of Isaac and of Jacob, and to the house of Judah, confined to the family of David, and its meaning more and more sharply defined by the various teachers in the long line of the prophets. The Messianic hope, always the *raison d'être* of Israel's existence, became the central thought of all its people. Finally, in the New Testament we have the record of the victory won over "him that hath the power of death," and the teaching that "there is none

other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

It often happens that even a correction of the text may be rightly made on the basis of the English version alone. When, *e. g.*, it is said in 2 Sam. viii. 4 that David took from the king of Zobah 700 horsemen, and in the otherwise precisely parallel passage, 1 Chr. xviii. 4, that he took 7,000, it is easy to see that one of the numbers has been changed by the copyist. The same thing is true in several other places. The "men of 700 chariots of the Syrians and 40,000 *horsemen*" of 2 Sam. x. 18, becomes the "7,000 which fought in chariots and 40,000 *footmen*" of 1 Chr. xix. 18. Compare also 2 Sam. xxiii. 8 with 1 Chr. xi. 11; 1 Ki. ix. 23 with 2 Chr. viii. 10; 1 Ki. ix. 28 with 2 Chr. viii. 18. In all these cases, except in the knowledge of the fact that numbers were anciently expressed by letters and that these were changed in decimal value by dots placed over them, the original gives us no help beyond the English translation. In other cases of a divergence of numbers, as in the duplicate census of the captives returning from exile, given in Ezra ii. and in Neh. vii., the English only enables us to see that there must be errors; a careful knowledge of the original is required for their conjectural correction.

On the other hand, serious difficulties on

which a knowledge of the original languages can throw no light are either much reduced or even entirely cleared away by information derived from the Scripture narrative itself. Thus in Mark ii. 26 our Lord speaks of Abiathar as the high priest at the time of David's eating the shew-bread ; but on turning to the history in 1 Sam. xxi. we find that Ahimelech was then the high priest, and from 1 Sam. xxii. 20, xxiii. 6, xxx. 7 that Abiathar was his son. Here is apparently an error ; but if we look at 2 Sam. viii. 17, 1 Chr. xxiv. 3, 6, 31, we find, on the other hand, that Ahimelech is described as the son of Abiathar. The natural inference, therefore, and one which removes the difficulty, is that both names were borne alike by father and son. The genealogy of our Lord in Matt. i., with its curious threefold division into parts of fourteen generations each, might be taken in Greek as well as in English for a full record of all the links in the ancestry of Joseph, were it not that many intermediate generations are supplied in the Old Testament history, and we thus come to see that the genealogy in Matthew is merely a summary of the prominent links in the line, so evidently arranged as a help to the memory that the name of David is actually repeated, after the Jewish fashion, to make out the successive numbers of fourteen each. God's hardening of

Pharaoh's heart, spoken of in Ex. iv. 21 and frequently elsewhere, and His raising up of Pharaoh for the purpose of showing in him His power (Ex. ix. 16, quoted in Rom. ix. 17) are not lessened in difficulty by an examination of the words in the original, but are to be explained by the general analogy of Scripture, and in fact present no difficulty when seen in the light of the Bible history.

But even more than this may be said. Instances are not wanting in which an excessive regard for supposed niceties of language has led commentators into erroneous interpretations from which they might have been saved by giving more weight to the context. The phrase "saints of the most High" in Dan. vii. 27 could never have been interpreted (as it is by Tregelles and others) of the "saints of the most High *places*" (*i. e.*, the Jews) if an excessive linguistic literalism had not overridden the weightier considerations to be drawn from the general scope of the prophecy. In the same way the expression "the Israel of God" in Gal. vi. 16 can only be understood of the Jews (as is done by so eminent a commentator as Ellicott) by such an excessive attention to the niceties of the Greek as allows us to suppose a self-stultification of the Apostle and an utter contradiction of his whole argument at the very point of its

climax. Several modern exegetes have maintained that the use of the pluperfect in Gen. xii. 1, "the **LORD** had said unto Abram," is an unfair translation, because, it is alleged, the form of the Hebrew verb here used does not admit of this sense, and it has even been called a disingenuous attempt to conform the narrative to the assertion of Stephen in Acts vii. 2; but however this may be in regard to the use of the Hebrew form (which is at least open to a difference of opinion)<sup>1</sup> the fact of a previous Divine call to Abram, in accordance with Stephen's statement, is made certain from the continuation of the narrative in Gen. xv. 7: "I am the **LORD** that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." He who would become an exegete on merely linguistic grounds, without regard to the general scope of Scripture, is like a man who would comprehend some beautifully adjusted machine by the study of each particular wheel and screw without considering the purpose of the whole, or rather like one who would seek to understand a living organism from the microscopic examination of each muscle and tissue without taking into account the functions of life and the adaptation of part to part and of each member to the whole.

The general knowledge of Scripture here

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Introduction, p. 33, note.

spoken of can only be attained as the result of study and reflection. One important means to it is the rapid reading of a whole book of Scripture, if possible at one sitting, in order to gain a view of its salient points and its purpose. It should be done in a paragraph Bible where the connection of thought is not broken in upon by the division into chapters and verses. This must be often repeated, for the various books are so connected as parts of one whole that the more perfect knowledge of one helps to the better understanding of another. This method of obtaining a general view of each book needs to be supplemented and interchanged with a more careful study of its important parts. Especially is it important to compare one book with another and observe the method in which the same matter is treated in each. A study of subjects or of historic characters treated in one book should be filled out with an examination of the way in which the same subject or person is spoken of elsewhere. It is very instructive, *e. g.*, to read in the Old Testament the whole history of Abraham or David rapidly, so as to impress upon the mind the prominent features of their story, and then to observe how they are spoken of in the Gospels, the epistles of Paul, and the epistle of James. Although the matter is attended with some peculiar difficulties which can

only gradually be removed, yet a knowledge of the connection of the two Testaments will be greatly increased by a careful examination of every quotation in the New and of the context in which it occurs in the Old. Another useful exercise, helping to this general knowledge of Scripture is the tracing out the incidental allusions in certain of the books to the history of the time in which others were written. Thus the connection of many of the psalms with the period in which they were composed, the allusions in the epistles of Paul to the circumstances narrated in the Acts, and the references in the prophets to the events and the condition of the people in the age in which they lived, all help to that general knowledge of the Scriptures of which we speak. These particulars are mentioned only as examples to illustrate the sort of study required. Other methods will readily suggest themselves to any one who enters earnestly upon the work.

Of great value as an aid in this matter are the introductions to the several books given in the better commentaries, and the articles upon the books and their authors in the various Dictionaries of the Bible, and "Introductions" to the Old and the New Testaments. These, however, like all other helps to interpretation, are always to be considered as secondary, and the information obtained from them must be verified by the

student's own proper labor. They are useful guides, but he must travel over the road himself.

In one way or another a fair general knowledge of the Bible as a whole must be acquired by every one who seeks to become a satisfactory interpreter of its particular parts. Of course this knowledge may be more and more increased to the end of life, and it is not necessary that one should have it in perfection at the outset of his work; but it is necessary that this knowledge should have been cultivated in full proportion to every other department.

Closely connected with this general knowledge of the whole Bible is a still more intimate acquaintance with the particular book which is to be the immediate subject of interpretation. However wide a scope may be given to inspiration, the individuality of each of the Scripture writers is nevertheless impressed, and often strongly impressed, upon his writing. It is, therefore, important to know him as thoroughly as possible in his own personality, in his mental constitution and habits, in his life experiences, and in his position in respect to those for whom he immediately wrote. To this end his life up to the time of his writing, his style and method of expression, and his immediate object in writing should be carefully studied. A comparison of the epistles of Paul with one another, written

as they were at different periods of a growing life, or of the Psalms of David, written under widely different circumstances, will be found suggestive in this respect. When the author cannot be known with certainty, or when the generally received authorship has been questioned, the time and circumstances under which the book was written can yet generally be ascertained with sufficient definiteness to enable us to look out from the writer's standpoint, and thus enter into the meaning of his teaching. Thus the broad difference of tone between Deuteronomy and the middle books of the Pentateuch is seen to be the natural result of the change in position and purpose from that of a legislator providing a minute system of ceremonial observances for a semicivilized people, to that of a patriarch at the close of life, leaving his parting exhortations to that people as they were about to enter, without him, upon the inheritance long promised to their fathers. So also the modification in some of the details of the legislation is just that which was required when the people were passing from the compact arrangement of their camp in the wilderness to their dispersion in their settled homes (cf. especially, Deut. xii. 15, with Lev. xvii. 3-5), and such modification is in itself both a strong evidence that the books were written under the circumstances to which they

are attributed, and also that such a change of the law must have been promulgated by the same authority as its original enactment, since no lesser authority could have ventured upon such change.

Along with this knowledge of the personality of the writer there is needed also a knowledge of the people whom he immediately addressed in their then existing circumstances. It is plain enough, *e. g.*, that the cosmogony of Genesis and the legislation of Mt. Sinai are largely affected by the condition of the people to whom they were given ; it would have been idle at that time to have written the one as if for a modern scientific audience, or to frame the other as for a people trained under the light and morality of the Gospel. The fourth Evangelist could hardly have written as he has at the time when the work of the first was completed, and the epistle of James could not have been wisely addressed to the Galatians as Paul knew them. The strong denunciations of the prophets find their justification in the condition of the people to whom they spoke ; Daniel's address to Nebuchadnezzar is very different from that to Belshazzar, in consequence of the different character of the two monarchs ; it is evident that Ezekiel, after prophesying to those who had been carried captive along with himself and thus purified by

some years of affliction, had men of much lower moral condition to deal with when their numbers were increased by the addition of those who had been left behind in Jerusalem, and had there grown steadily more corrupt. It is impossible to understand our Lord's addresses to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians without some knowledge of these various parties, and his reasoning with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection will seem inconclusive unless we remember that they denied not only the resurrection, but the existence altogether of angel or spirit (see *Acts xxiii. 8*).

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GEOGRAPHY AND THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF BIBLE LANDS.

A KNOWLEDGE of the simple geography of the countries mentioned in Scripture is obviously essential. Whether we have to do with the migrations of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, to Haran, to Shechem, to Bethel, to Egypt; whether we are concerned with the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness, or with their conquest of Palestine; with the wars against various nations under the Judges or during the monarchy; with the exile or the return; whether we would follow Paul in his wide missionary activity, or trace the footsteps of his Master in Judæa and in Galilee; everywhere it is necessary to know the geographical relations of the countries spoken of in order to understand the story.

Scarcely less essential is a knowledge of their physical geography, — their climate, their productions, their rivers, their soil, their caves, their mountains, and their plains. Of some of them the knowledge is so complete that little needs to be said; while of others the best knowledge at

present attainable is but imperfect. The Bible itself, attentively read, goes far towards describing the more familiar lands, such as Egypt and Palestine and the intervening desert. Still much additional matter, of no little value in the interpretation of the sacred narrative, is to be found in the accounts given in ancient monuments, and in the investigations of modern travelers. The nearly rainless climate of Egypt, the dependence of its fertility upon the annual overflow of the Nile, the system of irrigation, the method of planting and the succession of the crops, the character of the vegetation, and many such matters need to be studied. So also of the group of mountains around Sinai, the situation of the fertile valleys in that generally desolate peninsula, the shrubs, the trees, and the precious stones found there, and the traces in many parts of a former more abundant vegetation and population. In Palestine we need to know the natural features of the country not merely as bearing directly upon the narrative, whether of the Old or New Testament, but also as indirectly influencing the character of the various tribes and of the peoples who succeeded them. Much of our Lord's teaching comes to us with fresh force when listened to, as it were, in the locality in which it was spoken, and in view of the natural scenery by which He was surrounded. The

Scripture writers say little of the features of the country in which they lived; they were familiar with it themselves and so also were their immediate readers; but no one can stand where they stood without perceiving a new power in their language. As this is the case with the actual traveler, so is it true, in its degree, of him who takes the same journey in thought by the study of maps and descriptions of the land.

It is well to read over the Bible itself at least once with the especial purpose of noting every allusion to the physical geography of its lands. Besides this, one needs a thorough familiarity with the best maps that can be obtained, and these are well supplemented by the excellent photographs of every part of the country, which are now easily accessible; beyond these, one should not only study standard works, such as Robinson's "Biblical Researches," but should also avail himself of the most reliable books of travels in all the countries with which the Bible is concerned, and especially with the reports of scientific explorations, such as Lynch's "Dead Sea," the English "Ordnance Survey of the Sinaitic Peninsula," the various works of the Palestine Exploration Societies, and other works of this kind.

The sort of knowledge here recommended is not to be suddenly acquired by a set study, but

by going over the ground again and again, until by long dwelling upon these things they become a part of the mind's treasures to be unconsciously drawn upon as often as there may be occasion. Particularly in reading the various events in the life of our Lord, and many of His parables, we should be able mentally to transport ourselves into the midst of the scenes and surroundings in which He lived and spoke. It is not so much that any particular word or phrase will acquire a distinctly new meaning, although this is often the case ; but the whole will have a vividness, force, and reality not otherwise to be obtained.

This, like all other knowledge, is of gradual acquisition. The young interpreter may possess it in an imperfect degree ; but the essential thing is, that he should recognize it as one of the necessary qualifications of the well furnished exegete, and should aim continually to increase his preparation in this as in other respects.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GENERAL HISTORY OF SCRIPTURE TIMES.

THE Bible was not formed all at once as a complete work, but book has been added to book as the exigencies of the times required, and the whole has thus come to have an essentially historical structure. To this structure the history not only of the chosen people but of mankind has contributed (for although originally given to a peculiar nation, it was from the first intended ultimately for the whole race). This structure, apparent even upon its surface, is more and more developed by critical study, and can be understood only in the light of history; for although the Bible be of Divine origin, it has yet been manifested historically and in accordance with the laws of history. Each particular book of the Bible, too, had an immediate and local work to do which forms the reason why it should have been thrown primarily into the form which it actually bears, although this immediate and local work was in most cases not only for Israel in and by itself, but for Israel as it stood in its relations to mankind.

Again, it is plain, as has been urged in the introduction, that the Bible is the record of a progressive revelation, given to mankind from age to age with more and more distinctness according to man's capacity to receive it. To estimate fairly the degree of truth at any time conveyed, and to guard against the very common but really unscholarly objection, that it was not given with greater fullness, it is necessary to understand, not only the extent of previous revelations, but also the actual moral condition of the people to whom it was given; and that condition was largely affected by influences coming from beyond their own national boundaries. History, in its widest sense, alone can enable us to understand this condition, and thus to appreciate the successive revelations as they were given.

In addition to these general considerations, it is to be remembered that the Bible, directly considered, presents us with the history of the chosen people as they constituted the church of God, and speaks of them almost exclusively in this relation. After tracing the early history of mankind with extremest brevity, it follows one chosen line to the call in Abraham of a peculiar nation, and then treats of his stem with little reference to any other people except in so far as they directly interlocked with the history

of Israel. Its purpose is to lead on to the great central fact of the world's history, the redemption of mankind by the Messiah, and all history that does not bear upon this is left aside. This method has undoubtedly adapted the Bible to the spiritual wants of all classes in all ages, and nothing could be better fitted to impress upon mankind the inexpressible value of our spiritual relations above all other. At the same time, when the mind of the student has been led to inquire into the circumstances under which those spiritual relations have been developed, he needs to know other history. He needs to take, besides the inner view given in Scripture, an outer view also, and to look upon Israel, not only as the Church of God, but as a nation upon earth among other nations.

There is not very much of authentic history, outside of the Bible, before the time of Abraham, and what little remains is but imperfectly understood. Still such indications as are given by the monuments of Egypt and the inscriptions of Babylonia, together with the transcripts of the latter discovered in the ruins of Nineveh, are of great value. They present mankind to us, in the same general light, indeed, as the early chapters of Genesis, but with a filling out of the picture in many an interesting detail. The pyramids were already monuments of antiquity when

Abraham first looked upon them, and the Chaldean legends of his native country were already old enough to have become overlaid with a mass of legendary fable and perverted to the purposes of polytheism, when he was called forth from his country and kindred to keep alive in the world the knowledge of the one true God. When we have once become familiar with so much of genuine history as can be gathered from the mass of ancient legend, we find a new light dawning upon us in regard to the necessity of a church in the world, and learn far more than we should otherwise have known of the mercy and loving-kindness of the Father of all. About, or somewhat before the time of Abraham, secular history begins to have its definite and well established facts. These facts enable us to understand the circumstances in which this patriarch and his descendants lived. They bring before us two great powers, Egypt on the one side, and the combined nations of Mesopotamia on the other, struggling for supremacy. Sometimes it is Pharaoh with his chariots collecting the unwilling tribute of the nations along the Euphrates ; sometimes it is the “ Ravager of the West ” at the head of his confederate tribes ruling over and carrying into captivity the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. A little later, there is the culture and civilization of Egypt, in

the midst of which the Israelites grew up to be a people, with its shocking popular polytheism and its esoteric monotheism, with its strong civil organization and its highly developed priesthood. Then there is Egypt's protection of its eastern outposts by the colonization on its north-eastern border of the foreign race of Israel; and then comes (in what is to us the period of the Judges) the record of its oriental wars, Egypt and Israel, though not in alliance, having common foes, so that Egypt's prowess became the occasion of Israel's prosperity, while her depression or occupation with internal troubles gave the opportunity for Israel's enemies to carry out their schemes of oppression. This opens to the interpreter much wider views of the Providential ordering of the kingdoms of the world, and enables him to understand much that was obscure in the Scripture narrative considered by itself.<sup>1</sup>

As the history of surrounding nations becomes more distinct with the lapse of centuries,

<sup>1</sup> [The view, stated in the text, of the esoteric monotheism of the Egyptian priests has been called in question by some of the later Egyptologists, as has been also the location of the land of Goshen upon the northeastern frontier. There is, however, no such harmony or agreement at present among the students of Egyptian antiquities as to compel a change of opinion upon points which have long been regarded as well established. ED.]

it interlocks more and more with the history of Israel. In the later times of the monarchy it is necessary to trace the parallel lines in the story of the surrounding nations in order to comprehend that of Israel. The commerce between the cities of the coast and the great empires of the East, with its stations and its factors and all their corrupting influences, largely passed through Palestine, in the midst of the chosen people. The great wars between those empires and Egypt for the most part rolled along the Judæan coast. The history of Nineveh and its wars is almost a necessary introduction to the tale of the conquest and captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel, while that of the southern kingdom can only be thoroughly understood after studying the rise and progress of the empire of Nebuchadnezzar. To appreciate the earthly forces that were concerned in the restoration from the captivity, the history of the Medo-Persian empire must be studied, and to enter into the meaning of the prophecies of Daniel one is obliged to connect with the oriental empires, the history, the conquests, and the civilization of the successive great western empires, the Greek, and the Roman. A knowledge of the divisions of the former, and of the long struggles of the kingdoms of Alexander's successors with one another can alone either

make clear the prophecies of Daniel, or give us a knowledge of the noble efforts of the Maccabees, which had so vast an influence on the later character and fortunes of the Jewish people. Coming thus to the Gospel time, the relations of Rome to its subject peoples need to be studied, not only as respects the Jewish people, but towards all the nations to whom the Gospel was carried during the period of the New Testament writings. It is necessary to understand not only the outward political history, but also to enter into the various philosophical systems in vogue, to analyze the history of the current religions of the day, and to trace to some extent the rise and fall of the religious sects encountered by the writers of the Gospels and Epistles. No full understanding of these writings can be attained without such knowledge. The epistle to the Colossians, *e. g.*, requires of the interpreter a familiarity with the doctrines of the Essenes and, in connection with these, of the already rising views of the Gnostics. The religious and philosophical opinions of the Athenians need to be studied to appreciate Paul's allusion to "the unknown God" (Acts xvii. 23), or to understand why the doctrine of the resurrection should have seemed to them so especially absurd (ib., 32). The condition of Roman religious philosophy must be known to see what Pilate meant by his question

“ What is truth ? ” (John xviii. 38) ; and of the attitude of Roman power towards new religions, to understand the proconsul’s conduct when Paul was accused before him, and the historian’s remark that Gallio cared for none of these things (Acts xviii. 17). Sometimes even the use and meaning of particular words in the New Testament is only thus to be explained. John’s use of *λόγος* (John i. 1–3, 14) is peculiar to himself ; and to see how and why he used it, and what he meant to teach by it, the interpreter should be familiar with the use of בְּרִיאָה in the Jewish Targums, and with the philosophico-theological discussions of Philo, as well as with the oriental doctrine of divine emanations, and the philosophy of Plato. As another and far less important illustration, may be mentioned the word *κορβᾶν* in Mark vii. 11, as requiring for its explanation a knowledge of the law of vows in Lev. xxvii. 1–8, and of the Pharisaic perversion of that law. Not infrequently there are statements or allusions requiring historical knowledge for their interpretation. The whole point of John Baptist’s reproof of Herod for his marriage with Herodias (Matt. xiv. 3, 4) turns upon the fact, not mentioned in the text, that his brother Philip was still living.

Often the personal character and life of the public men of the time, as of Herod, or of

Gallio, enters as a factor into the narrative ; and continually the position of the speaker or writer is so affected by historical circumstances or personal characteristics that, without a knowledge of these, it is impossible to enter into the standpoint of the writers and thus come to understand precisely what they meant to say. Even familiarity with the later history of Christian institutions often throws light upon the meaning of incidental notices, as, for example, the repeated mention of the assembling of the disciples "on the first day of the week" is explained by the observance of the Lord's day in the Christian Church.

Great facilities for such historical study are afforded by the more modern commentaries and books of reference ; yet, here as everywhere, it is never to be forgotten that those students stand upon a firmer and broader ground who have obtained this knowledge for themselves from original authorities, or at least from authorities who did not have the interpretation of Scripture as their object. Every opportunity, therefore, should be embraced by the student to fill his mind with the history both of the political events and of the philosophies, religions, and opinions of all the nations which come in contact with the sacred volume, and also with the life and character of the more prominent heathen

actors on the scene, so that all these things may rise up unconsciously in his mind, as a part of his own personal knowledge, as often as he applies himself to the interpretation of any part of Scripture on which they have a bearing.

## CHAPTER V.

### ARCHÆOLOGY AND ANTIQUITIES.

THE subject of this chapter is closely connected with that of the last, and may seem, to some extent, to have been anticipated; but it would be a broad sense of history which would include all that is here intended. The archæology and antiquities of the following nations have an especial bearing upon the interpretation of the Bible: Egypt; the tribes of the Desert; the Phœnician nations; the various civilizations that dominated in turn the regions around the Tigris and Euphrates, going back to the days anterior to Abraham, and coming down at least to the Maccabean period; Palestine itself, both in its original possession, and as the home of the chosen people; Greece, in its conquests under Alexander, and later in its condition just at and subsequent to the Christian era; and Rome, with all those subject nations not yet included in this summary, particularly those of Asia Minor. Here is a wide field, part of which has already been carefully explored, and the results of those explorations made easily acces-

sible ; part of it is very little known, and, for want of sufficient data, is not likely ever to become very familiar, but in regard to which such glimpses of information as we have are particularly valuable ; and still another part is under a rapid process of investigation, every year adding largely to our stores of knowledge.

Egypt has become almost as familiar as the classic lands, and has been made to yield up stores of long buried information having a most intimate connection with large portions of the holy volume. So much of the history of the patriarchs and their descendants is bound up with Egypt, from the days of Abraham down to the Exodus, that its traditions and monuments have long been a storehouse of illustrations for the Old Testament commentator. The connection was renewed under the reign of Solomon and continued through the period of the monarchy, closing with so great an emigration of Jews to the land of the Pharaohs as to require the translation of the Septuagint, a work of powerful influence upon the New Testament writers. Perhaps the most important influence of Egypt was upon the Mosaic legislation and ceremonial. Much yet remains to be done in tracing the influence of the one upon the other, but that there was such an influence, of a most important character, cannot be doubted by those

who consider, on the one hand, that the people had lived for so many generations under the influence of Egyptian thought, and culture, and ceremonial, and, on the other, that God has always shown a tender regard for the needs and capacities of His people by adapting His commands to their condition at the time they were given. It is to be remembered too, that, as has been already said,<sup>1</sup> with all its outrageous popular creature worship, the religion of Egypt was yet based upon an esoteric doctrine of monotheism with which probably Abraham, certainly Joseph and Moses, must have been intimately acquainted. The influence of an hereditary priesthood, the universal and firmly rooted belief in the life beyond the grave and the future state of retribution, the high state of advancement in the arts and manufactures, the more prominent position of woman in society, and a multitude of other matters, must have made a deep impression upon a people who grew to be a nation and lived for generations in their midst; and even if it be difficult to trace the positive influence of some of these things upon the legislation given from Sinai, it yet remains that they deeply affected the character and habits of the people to whom that legislation was given, and hence of necessity, indirectly at least, that legis-

<sup>1</sup> Page 95, note.

lation itself. As a single instance of the influence of Egypt upon the Israel of a later day, one needs but to ask whence Solomon derived the idea of the porch in front of the temple (1 Kings vi. 3 ; 2 Chron. iii. 4), which had nothing corresponding to it in the earlier tabernacle. A glance at a photograph of the propylon of a temple in the land from which Solomon asked the daughter of Pharaoh in marriage, will give the answer.

The archæology of Babylon and Nineveh is important in another direction. Their monumental inscriptions and the records of their clay tablets and cylinders, in so far as yet exhumed and deciphered, present to view the heathen legend corresponding to much of the early narratives of Genesis.<sup>1</sup> Some of these may be of but little more value than the traditions of many other nations concerning the creation, the fall, and the flood, yet are more interesting as found in the locality near which all such traditions must have had their origin. But others, such as the inscription of Nebuchadnezzar on the tower of Borsippa, recording the ancient suspension of the building of the tower on account of the confusion of tongues, bear such distinct testimony to the Scripture statement, as to show that this must be interpreted historically, and not as an allegorical presentation of what happened to

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Smith, Chaldean Genesis.*

mankind.<sup>1</sup> Others, again, like the inscription of Nabunahit, speaking of his son, Bel-shar-ezer, as sitting also upon the throne, remove what had long been considered as insoluble difficulties from the sacred page.<sup>2</sup> The linguistic and ethnological revelations in this unique literature are of the highest value to the interpreter ; and the actual historical statements interlock strikingly with the narrative of the later Israelitish monarchies. It is not to be expected that the ordinary exegete can make himself familiar with either the language or the character of these cuneiform inscriptions, any more than with the hieroglyphics of Egypt ; but in both cases the interest in these discoveries is so manifold and so great, that the results of the labors of special students are being continually spread before the public in accessible form, and these results are in many cases so confirmed as the fruit of the independent labor of scholars in different lands that they may be accepted as reliable.

These instances may suffice to show the importance to the exegete of other archæological investigations. The value of a study of Greek and Roman antiquities is so well understood that

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Oppert, in *Smith's Dictionary* (Am. Ed.), art. "Confusion of Tongues." Appendix ; cf., also, *Records of the Past*, vol. vii., pp. 131, 132 and Rawlinson, *Egypt and Babylon*, pp. 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Records of the Past*, vol. v., p. 144; *vide*, also, Rawlinson, as above, pp. 111-124.

it does not require to be dwelt upon. Much has been done in this matter by multitudes of scholars from old time; but gleanings of great interest still remain to reward the labor of the modern investigator.<sup>1</sup>

It is plain that the exegete, to be properly furnished for his work, must keep himself well abreast of all modern archæological researches, not only in connection with the nations especially mentioned, but also with others of which there is not space to speak particularly.

Another use of such researches is to put the student in possession of a portraiture of the manners and customs, the ideas and thoughts of nations who came continually into contact with the Hebrews, and must have exercised no small influence over them, not to speak of the more direct examination of the same things among the Israelites themselves, valuable not only for the time to which they immediately relate, but also for all times in the history of that oriental people, whose habits and customs had such remarkable fixity.

A word only need be said, in conclusion, of the lifelike reality which is given to the narratives and the allusions of the New Testament by the knowledge of the surroundings and the circumstances in the midst of which they occurred.

<sup>1</sup> For further illustration, *vide* chapters xv., xvi., on "The Use of History" and "The Use of Archæology."

## CHAPTER VI.

### KNOWLEDGE OF NATURAL SCIENCE.

THE qualification of the interpreter now to be spoken of is not only rarely possessed, but its value is not appreciated. It is easy to see that in a few well-known instances the advance of natural science has essentially modified the common interpretation of particular passages, as, *e. g.*, those which speak of the rising and setting of the sun, or of the four corners of the earth. It is also well known that some serious difficulties with particular statements have been removed in the same way, as in regard to the brittleness of the gold of the calf in the wilderness (Ex. xxxii. 20). The study of the laws of leprosy in Lev. xiii., xiv., and of many other diseases mentioned in Scripture, is greatly aided by medical research. But it is apt to be thought that these results of natural science come to the aid of the interpreter only in a few isolated cases, which can readily be taken on trust at second hand. No view can be more mistaken. The word and the works of God are in some sort parallel revelations, and the one must continually

illustrate and explain the other. A knowledge of nature, in other words, a knowledge of all that is just and true in natural science, must directly affect the interpretation of that large part of the Divine word which bears upon nature, and must also be a most important factor in our conceptions of the being and the activity of the God of nature and revelation alike.

Moreover, science is continually led to the investigation of questions, such as the origin of life, which had been supposed long settled by the accepted interpretations of Scripture, while on the other hand, the Bible deals unhesitatingly with many a point, such as the creation, the intervention of the supernatural in the affairs of the world, and the resurrection to come, on which it is often thought that science is entitled to an opinion. With this constant interlacing of the work of the exegete with the work of the scientist, of which only a very few instances have been mentioned, it is not to be supposed that the teachings of Scripture can be fairly interpreted without knowing what light is cast upon them by the researches of science.

Again, a knowledge of natural science is necessary to any intelligent appreciation of the proper limits of its domain, and hence of the points where the interpreter ought to be guided by its teachings. The human mind is so con-

stituted that it strives to complete its cycle of truth, and the student of Scripture must necessarily have his opinions upon questions of natural science which stand closely related to the teachings of revelation. If these are formed without scientific knowledge, they will be quite likely to be formed erroneously ; and experience shows that, once adopted, they are apt to be adhered to and to be set forth as if they had been distinctly revealed. Then comes that unfortunate result, that while such opinions are found to be erroneous and are rejected as such by the student of science, they are maintained as the truth of the word of God by the unfurnished interpreter. The so-called conflict between religion and science has arisen in large measure from this source. The danger was seen and a warning note was uttered by the wiser theologians of antiquity. Augustine earnestly enjoined the Christians of his day not to involve opinions on physical science with the teaching of the Bible. When better instructed unbelievers, he says, "discover some Christian in error in a matter which they themselves know thoroughly, and supporting his opinion out of our books, how shall they believe those books concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think them delusively written on things which they

can know by actual experience or by certain calculations? How great sorrow and anxiety do these rash dogmatizers inflict on their wiser brethren, if, when they are blamed and convicted of the rashness and falsehood of their opinion by those who are not bound by the authority of our books, they seek to defend what they have said with most inconsiderate rashness or most evident error out of the same sacred books."<sup>1</sup>

There are certain of the broader and grander generalizations of modern natural science which have a most intimate bearing on the view to be taken of the being and attributes of the Supreme; but these generalizations cannot be intelligently held without some knowledge of the inductions by which they have been reached. Such are, in the first place, the recognition of the insufficiency of nature for itself, and the necessity, therefore, of supposing some Power above and beyond, under whose ordering nature has been evolved; this we recognize to be distinctly the position of the advanced science of our time. Again, there can be no firmer conclusion of science than that the whole cosmos is under the government of an immutable order which is commonly described as "natural law," although without, perhaps, a very distinct recognition of the meaning of the word "law;" it is only nec-

<sup>1</sup> Aug., *De Genesi ad litteram*, I. xix. 39.

essary to understand this word as a convenient expression for the immutable will of the Supreme Being, and we are at once brought to the position so much insisted upon in Scripture, and learn to attach a fresh fullness of meaning to its teachings. This idea of the unchangeableness of God, constantly insisted upon in the descriptions of "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. i. 17), is a most important factor in exegesis, and is brought into the clearest light by the conclusions of science. It at once removes all those interpretations, once so current, which represent our Heavenly Father as an arbitrary or capricious Being. Along with this truth comes the doctrine of the *immanence* of the Creator in his works. Science recognizes that nature has not only ultimately proceeded from a Power beyond itself, but is constantly sustained by it. The Force which gave it being remains always its sustaining cause. The interpreter is thus led back again from secondary causes to the conception of the old Hebrew seers of God in everything; all is his work, and, as Paul expresses it, He is "all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28; Eph. i. 23; cf. 1 Cor. xii. 6; Col. iii. 11). The influence of this conception upon the whole scheme of interpretation is plain. Closely connected with this is still another truth, always obvious indeed,

but one which scientific researches have strongly emphasized. While the laws of nature, in other words, the Divine will, remain unchangeable, the course of nature may be greatly modified by the intervention of intelligence. This is seen on so large a scale and under so great variety of circumstance in man's action upon the earth that it is difficult to set any bounds to the modification of the course of nature which may be accomplished by Infinite Power without becoming inconsistent with Itself. This covers the whole ground of the possibility of miracles, and shows how they are to be understood at once as evidences of the presence of supernatural power, and yet as not violations of the laws of nature; in fact, evidences of that Power *because*, like all other things, they must be consistent with those laws which are but the expression of the unchangeable will of God.

Again, science, in showing that nature is insufficient to itself and that there must be a Power behind it, shows that this Power, in its own Essence, must be inscrutable to man. The infinite cannot be comprehended of the finite. Science thus helps us to interpret those many passages which declare that "no man hath seen God at any time" (John i. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 16), that no man by searching can find him out (Job xi. 7, etc.). This truth has many and most im-

portant bearings for the interpreter. It shows the necessity of a mediator that the Infinite and the finite may be brought together. It shows the folly of attempting to portray the Divine Being as but an omnipotent man; and it leads us to expect to find in His revelation indications of that which is beyond the grasp of the finite mind. Farther, this scientific truth of the inscrutableness of God in His absolute Essence, makes it clear that any revelation of Himself to man must be, not absolute, but in terms adapted to man's capacity, and hence more or less both partial and anthropomorphic; and that these characteristics of revelation will be more marked in the spiritual infancy of the race, gradually lessening as a higher spiritual education is attained. This is a most important clue to the interpretation of Scripture. So much has been said in this connection in the introduction that it need not be enlarged upon here except to note that however else the same conclusion may be reached, it also comes as a necessary result of scientific thought.

Enough has been said to show the value to the exegete of preparation for his work by a knowledge of natural science. It not merely cultivates his mind on another side, and gives him that balance of thought necessary to the

best work in every department, but it especially enables him to see how the Almighty is presented to human thought through His activities in nature, and thus helps to understand the revelation of Himself in His word.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RELIGIOUS PREPARATION OF THE INTER- PRETER.

THIS chapter has been purposely deferred to this point that the religious qualification of the interpreter may not seem to be treated merely as a matter of conventional propriety, but rather as one of his really necessary qualifications, along with others, though more fundamentally essential than any other, to the true understanding of the Scriptures.

In all interpretation the first requisite is, that the interpreter should place himself in the position of the writer, and study the writing from his standpoint and in reference to the object he had in view. Now the one thing common to all, or nearly all, the writers of Scripture is, that they were religious men and wrote for a religious purpose. Only a religious man can see things as they saw them, and understand things as they understood them. It is often possible for a person to transport himself in thought and imagination into circumstances and conditions of mind and heart which are not his own, and

thus come to appreciate that of which he has no actual experience, and this must be done in many matters by every modern interpreter of an ancient writer ; but it cannot be done in regard to their general religious character. The difference betweeen the religious and the irreligious man lies far too deep down among the ultimate facts of human nature. “ That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ” (John iii. 6) ; “ the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned ” (1 Cor. ii. 14). The teaching of Scripture itself thus concurs with the abundant lesson of life, that there is an experience of all-pervading character which some men lack, and which others have in greater or less degree, and this is precisely the experience which enables them to understand the Divine dealings with man, and the Heavenly message to him. It is an experience which is concerned with the obedience of the heart to the will of God ; and unless the interpreter’s own heart is thus obedient, he cannot expect to understand those whose lives were subjected to the will of God, and who wrote for the express object of leading others to submit to the same will.

It does not follow from this that the Bible is

a sealed book, utterly incomprehensible to the worldly man, any more than that it is so to him who has no knowledge of its original languages, or of ancient history ; for then it must fail of its purpose in leading man on from his natural state to the love and obedience of God. But it does follow that, since the Bible is essentially a spiritual book, it is impossible to enter into its deeper and richer meaning until there is a religious harmony between it and the spirit of the interpreter.

Not only were the writers themselves religious men, but behind them, and inspiring them, was the Holy Spirit. Difficult as it may be to define the precise nature and mode of action of inspiration, it is plain that, in consequence of it, the sacred writings are different from what they would otherwise have been. What is there said has often a deeper meaning than the writers themselves knew, — not another meaning, as if they had expressed themselves ambiguously, but a fullness of meaning beyond their power of penetration. A young man may use truly words expressive of the experience of life, which will come in later years to have, even to himself, a force he did not understand when he first uttered them. So the infants of the spiritual kingdom, under the guidance of its Head, have so written, that only those under the teaching of the same

Spirit can enter into His meaning, and even with them, a life of spiritual experience shall still fail to exhaust the richness of His teaching.

Our Lord points out to the unbelieving Jews that they could not understand His speech, simple enough in its words, because their *hearts* were alienated from the truth (John viii. 43); and again He said that obedience to the will of the Father was a necessary prerequisite to a knowledge of the doctrine He taught (John vii. 17). His Apostles continually speak of the need of spiritual enlightenment in order to know the revelation made to the Church, and they considered those who were "alienated from the life of God" as having "the understanding darkened" (see Eph. i. 18; iv. 18, etc.). The "beloved disciple," in all his writings, brings out with especial fullness the fact, that the "understanding that we may know Him that is true" is a gift of God, given to them that are "in His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John v. 20, etc.).

It must then certainly be right, even from the intellectual point of view, to set down a knowledge and experience of the religious life as among the foremost and chiefest of the necessary qualifications of the exegete for his work. Without this, he may explain never so accurately the outward and superficial sense of the word of life, but he can never penetrate to the meaning

of that life itself. While, therefore, all learning and knowledge and study need to be applied to the interpretation of the Bible, they must first be laid at the foot of the cross, and there be touched by the enlightening Spirit of God. In this work it is true with an especial emphasis, *Bene orasse est bene studuisse.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES.

AFTER the more general preparation of the interpreter spoken of in the preceding chapters, it goes without saying that he must have a knowledge of the original languages. For this there is a double reason: first, that he may be able to ascertain the exact sense of the Divine oracles conveyed in those languages; and second, but not less important, that he may be able to enter into the general tone and spirit of those oracles.

The Bible, and especially the Old Testament, is in its human form thoroughly the work of a Semitic people, and bears the impress of their peculiar genius. While that genius is learned in some measure from their history, it is to be understood still more intimately from their language. Without a knowledge of this, the interpreter can but imperfectly enter into the mind of the writers.

The languages of the Bible are the Hebrew, the Chaldee, and the Greek. So small a part

of the Old Testament is in Chaldee, and that language differs so little from the Hebrew, that a knowledge of it might seem unnecessary except for the interpretation of the passages actually written in Chaldee. Those portions, however, especially chapters ii. and vii. of Daniel, are of great importance, and the Biblical Hebrew, both in its very earliest form, before it had become completely differentiated from the Chaldee, and also in its later development at the time of the captivity, when it was directly influenced by the Chaldee, is only to be fully understood by the aid of this dialect; moreover, a knowledge of it so helps to the understanding of the language chiefly spoken in Palestine by the Jews of the Christian era, that this also must be placed among the requisite apparatus of the Biblical exegete. Further, it is only by this that the ancient Jewish paraphrases of the Old Testament, known as *Targums*, can be unlocked, and these are often a material aid to the interpreter.

In regard to the Hebrew and Greek, both are essential to the interpreter whether of the Old or of the New Testament. Although the New Testament is in Greek, yet it is in Greek largely influenced by Hebrew, and one must understand Hebrew to rightly appreciate its deviations from the classic model as well as from its modification

in the so-called *κοινὴ διάλεκτος*.<sup>1</sup> Besides this, the writings of the New Testament abound in quotations from the Old, in reference to its law, its poetry, and its history, and in fact are professedly a new revelation made within and based upon the old. As it is impossible rightly to interpret the New without a knowledge of the Old Testament, so a knowledge of the language of the latter becomes a necessity to the understanding of the former. Still further, it is to be remembered that the language probably spoken by our Lord, and in some instances distinctly said to have been used by his Apostles, was a dialect called Aramaic, so little modified from the Hebrew as still to be described by that name, as in John xix. 20; Acts xxi. 40. So far as these portions are concerned, the Greek offers us only a translation of the words actually used. While it cannot be necessary to know in all cases the original of those words, since Providence has not seen fit that they should be pre-

<sup>1</sup> The Attic dialect gradually degenerated into what is known as the *κοινὴ διάλεκτος*, and on this was founded the so-called Macedo-Alexandrian dialect, which, becoming ancient in the time of the Ptolemies, spread from Alexandria over the Greek Asiatic kingdoms. In this process not only did words often become modified in sense, and new constructions come in, as in the history of all languages, but in this enormous expansion of Greek culture and power, it assimilated to itself, and was obliged to provide for, the intellectual needs of peoples of many lands and races.

served, yet oftentimes a knowledge of their language will enable us to interpret correctly their Greek translation where we should otherwise be in danger of going astray. Thus in Matt. xvi. 18, occurs the famous passage  $\sigma\bar{u}\ \epsilon\bar{l}\ \Pi\acute{e}tr\bar{o}s$ ,  $\kappa\bar{a}\ \dot{\epsilon}\pi\bar{i}\ \tau\acute{a}n\tau\bar{u}\ \tau\bar{h}\ \pi\acute{e}tr\bar{a}\ \bar{o}\bar{i}\bar{k}\bar{o}\bar{d}\bar{o}\bar{m}\bar{h}\bar{s}\bar{w}\ \mu\bar{o}\bar{u}\ \tau\bar{h}\bar{v}\ \dot{\epsilon}\bar{k}\bar{k}\bar{l}\bar{h}\bar{s}\bar{i}\bar{a}\bar{v}$ , where many commentators have insisted upon the difference in gender between the forms  $\pi\acute{e}tr\bar{os}$  and  $\pi\acute{e}tr\bar{a}$ . A knowledge of Greek alone gives a reason for this change in the Greek form,  $\pi\acute{e}tr\bar{os}$ , the masculine, being necessary as the surname of a man, while  $\pi\acute{e}tr\bar{a}$  is also necessary as the designation of a foundation, meaning *a rock in situ*, while  $\pi\acute{e}tr\bar{os}$  signifies only *a stone*. A possible doubt here arises from the fact that  $\pi\acute{e}tr\bar{os}$  is sometimes, though rarely, used in the sense of  $\pi\acute{e}tr\bar{a}$  in poetry. This doubt is at once removed by turning to the Chaldee, where we find that both words are represented by the form **אַפָּיָה** = Cephas, which John alone has preserved in the Gospels (i. 42), but which occurs frequently in the Pauline epistles (1 Cor. i. 12; iii. 22; ix. 5; xv. 5; Gal. i. 18; ii. 9, 11, 14). This was undoubtedly the word actually used by our Lord, and scarcely leaves room for question that He intended to designate Peter personally as the human foundation of His church, as it actually came to pass historically among the Jews and the Gentiles alike.

Not less necessary to the interpreter of the Old Testament is a knowledge of Greek. Very many passages are quoted and interpreted in the New Testament, and it is necessary to study carefully that interpretation. Broad views are frequently there given of large portions of the Old Testament, and the interpreter needs to know precisely what those views are. But beside this direct connection between the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, upon which it is scarcely possible to lay too much emphasis, there is a further use of the Greek in the interpretation of the older Scriptures by themselves. The earliest complete translation of them was into the Greek of the Septuagint. Although that translation is of very unequal accuracy, and was evidently made by men unequally skilled in Hebrew, yet parts of it at least were made nearly three centuries before the Christian era, and nearer than this to the time when the Hebrew was still a living language, and when traditional interpretation was still of great value. While, therefore, it is often plain that the translators have quite mistaken the sense of their original, and while no great reliance can be placed upon them in passages where the text of the Hebrew may be supposed to be vitiated, yet the interpreter cannot afford to dispense with the light of this earliest of the

versions, made by men who were themselves Hebrews.

In addition to these languages there are several others of more or less value to the interpreter. The Samaritan version, which extends through the Pentateuch, is of great antiquity. After much discussion of its age, it is now generally considered to belong to the time when Manasseh, with many other priests, apostatized from Jerusalem to Samaria, and was confirmed in his high-priesthood upon Mount Gerizim by Alexander as he passed to his eastern conquests. This gives it a considerably greater age than the Septuagint, and it is also a far more literal version. Its critical value is not great, and it bears evident marks of some corruption of the Hebrew ceremonial; but it is still worthy of the attention of the interpreter. In more than a thousand places it agrees with the Septuagint in its differences from the Hebrew; while in about as many it differs from them both where they agree, and in still others where they differ, it differs from them both.

There are no other versions before the Christian era. Subsequent to that date there are three principal Greek versions of the Old Testament, those of Aquila, of Theodotion, and of Symmachus. Only fragments have been preserved of any of these. That of Aquila follows

the Hebrew so servilely that its remaining portions are of use in the criticism of the Hebrew text. Both this and the version of Theodotion were undoubtedly prepared with a polemical purpose, in the interest of Jews hostile to Christianity ; yet Theodotion's translation of Daniel was so much preferred by Origen to that of the Septuagint that it was used in its place in the Christian churches, and is now found in the printed editions of the Septuagint. The true Septuagint version was long supposed to be lost, and has only been recovered from a single manuscript ; from this it is printed as an appendix in Tischendorf's Septuagint.

The most important by far of the post-Christian versions is that of Jerome, which forms the basis of the present Vulgate. This translation was made at a far earlier time than that of any existing Hebrew manuscripts, and long before the introduction of the Masoretic vowel points and accents. Jerome obtained his knowledge of the language, of the Hebrew text, and of the details of its meaning from the Jews of Palestine ; and as his scholarship was unquestionable, and his fidelity as a translator conspicuous, his version becomes an important aid both in the criticism of the Hebrew text and the interpretation of its meaning. No other version is of equal value in the Old Testament. He did not

give the same care to the New Testament, where his work was not that of a new translation, but only a revision of existing translations, and even this was chiefly confined to the Gospels. In the New Testament it is necessary to have recourse to the “*Vetus Latina*” and to the “*Itala*,” in connection with Jerome’s version; and, even thus, the Latin of the New Testament is of more value for the criticism of the text than for the interpretation of its meaning.

Besides these, the Syriac version may be warmly recommended to the exegete, especially in the New Testament, both because of its great antiquity, and also because the language is so closely assimilated to the Hebrew and Chaldee as to throw no inconsiderable light upon the words actually used by our Lord. The same fact makes its acquisition very easy to the Hebrew scholar. There are a series of Syriac versions extending from the second to the seventh century. The Arabic is much later and of far less value as a version, while that language is so full and rich as to make its acquisition a matter of considerable difficulty. The Arabic, however, is by far the most complete of all the Semitic tongues, and hence its great value for purposes of comparative philology is recognized by Hebrew lexicographers. Great caution is required in its use in this way, and a constant recollec-

tion of the changes in sense which words frequently undergo in cognate languages. Other ancient languages into which the Scriptures have been translated, such as the Ethiopic, the Armenian, and the Gothic, are of more importance to the New Testament textual critic than to the interpreter. Translations into modern languages have somewhat the value of commentaries, oftentimes showing the meaning of the text adopted by scholars who especially devoted themselves to the work of translation.

## CHAPTER IX.

### TEXTUAL CRITICISM.

THE criticism of the text of Scripture is a special art, demanding special preparation and researches of a kind so thorough and exhaustive that it must, in the main, be left as the life work of the specialist. The determination of the text, moreover, is generally more safely entrusted to other hands than those of the exegete, since his judgment is in danger of being warped by his interpretation. It would always be rash in him to call in question the common conclusion of scholars who have made textual criticism their especial study. But there are many passages in which no such common conclusion has been reached in consequence of conflicting evidence, and there are others in which the conclusion has been based largely on internal evidence, and in many of these the exegete is as competent a judge as the critic. For the sake of both these classes of passages, and also that the exegete may know the character and force of the evidence in other cases, it behooves him to make himself familiar with the principles of textual

criticism. He will not need often to apply them independently ; but he ought to know what they are.

That the text of neither of the Testaments has come down to us in a perfect condition has already been shown in the introduction. It is the object of textual criticism to ascertain and restore, as nearly as possible, the original text as it left the hands of the sacred penman. The data and the methods for this purpose are quite different in the case of the Old and of the New Testaments. It will be necessary to treat them separately, and it is better to speak of the text of the New Testament first, since far more labor has been bestowed upon it, the principles of its criticism are better settled, the data for establishing it more complete, and there is more general acquiescence in the results obtained.

## I. TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The “Textus Receptus” of the New Testament is a term variously applied to the edition of Robert Stephens of 1550, or to the first edition of the Elzevirs, 1624. In both cases it was an attempt, on the basis of a small number of manuscripts and such research as the times allowed, to present a text which should approach as nearly as possible to the original writing.

Afterwards, more and better manuscripts came to light; means were found of determining their age within narrow limits, and of ascertaining their relative value; much attention was given by competent scholars to the art of determining the true reading, and a large amount of valuable data was gradually accumulated. Really critical editions may be considered, however, as beginning in 1774 with Griesbach, whose labors extended to 1807. Since his time the data have been continually accumulating, important manuscripts have been brought to light, versions have been more carefully examined, and the principles of textual criticism have been discussed and elaborated until they may now be considered as settled on a firm basis. Many critical editions have consequently been published, giving the authorities on both sides for and against the various readings. Among the most recent and important of these, besides the special work of Lachmann, are the editions of Tregelles, the eighth edition of Tischendorf, and that of Westcott and Hort.

The data for the determination of the text are, in the first place, manuscripts. The whole number of manuscripts containing any part of the New Testament is very large; but only a comparatively small portion of them contain the whole, and of these the greater part have suf-

fered more or less from the ravages of time. These manuscripts are of unequal value. It is plain that a carelessly written one of the fifteenth century cannot compare with a carefully written one of the fourth or fifth. The great advance of textual criticism was made when the means were discovered of distinguishing between the manuscripts of more and of less value. They are broadly divided into two classes, *uncials* and *cursives*. The former are written throughout in capital letters, and are referred to under the capital letters: first of the Roman alphabet (A, B, C, etc.), then of the letters of the Greek alphabet unlike them (Γ, Δ, Θ, etc.), and finally the Codex Sinaiticus as Ι. The latter are written in cursive characters and are designated by the Arabic numerals 1, 2, 3, etc. Uncial was the common form of writing until the middle of the tenth century, while cursive began to be used towards the close of the ninth, and became the prevailing form from the eleventh, onwards. In general, therefore, the *uncials* are older than the *cursives*; but it does not follow that in all cases the older manuscripts are the better. It may have been that a manuscript of the eleventh century, *e. g.*, has been carefully copied from one of the fourth now no longer in existence, while another of the fifth century has only been copied from a contemporary. There are also great dif-

ferences in the care and skill with which the work of the copyist has been done. It is necessary, therefore, to test the manuscripts and determine which of them contain the most accurate text. This has been done by selecting a large number of test passages and determining the true reading independently of the manuscripts, and then observing which of them correspond most closely with the readings thus determined. In this way it has been decided that the very oldest manuscripts are also the best, and that a comparatively few later ones are to be ranked next to them. The joint testimony of these few outweighs the authority of the great mass of inferior manuscripts. For a fuller description of the manuscripts and their classification and relative value, reference must be made to the various special works on textual criticism. None of these manuscripts are earlier than the fourth century, and there are only two, **N** and **B**, of that age.

The next source for the determination of the text is found in the "Versions." The more important of these were made with scrupulous fidelity at an age far anterior to the earliest existing manuscripts. The most important, as well as the most carefully studied, is the Latin. This is known in several forms, the oldest of which, the "Vetus Latina," had already received a

definite shape by the middle of the second century. It was prepared in North Africa, and is in barbarous Latin, but follows the Greek text with exceeding closeness. Its manuscripts are referred to by the small letters of the Roman alphabet, a, b, c, etc., these three, a, b, c, being of far greater importance than the others. When this version passed over to Northern Italy, the uncouthness of its language led, in the fourth century, to a revision known as the "Itala," the manuscripts of which are designated by the same kind of letters, that marked f being the most valuable of them. Several other revisions were made which are occasionally referred to, and by the close of the fourth century the confusion had become so great that Jerome was requested to undertake a revision. His labor was chiefly spent upon the Gospels, and most manuscripts of this revision are cited under the abbreviations, am. (Codex Amiatinus) and fuld. (Codex Fuldensis). This revision of Jerome became the basis of the Vulgate, which has undergone many further revisions.

The Syriac versions stand next in value to the Latin, and, like the Latin, exist in several different forms. There is evidence of the existence of a Syriac translation of the Gospels at least as early as the middle of the second century. There exists now but a single imperfect

manuscript (of the fifth century), the Curetonian, which is supposed to represent this version. The “Peshito” Syriac, however, is very early, certainly earlier than the fourth century, and therefore earlier than any existing Greek manuscripts. Other Syriac translations are the “Philoxenian” (A. D. 508), the “Harklean” (a revision of the last, A. D. 616), and the “Jerusalem-Syriac.”

The Egyptian versions, called respectively the Sahidic (or Thebaic) and the Coptic (or Memphitic), belong to the second and third centuries, and are of considerable value, although needing further critical labor. The Gothic version of Ulphilas is certainly of the fourth century, and the Ethiopic of that or the following century. The Armenian belongs to the middle of the fifth century.

All these versions are used in the determination of the text, but reference must be made to special works and to the introductions and dictionaries for a fuller account of them.

The next source for the determination of the text is in the abundant Patristic quotations from the New Testament. This evidence is seriously lessened in value by the habit of the scribes, in copying the writings of the Fathers, to *correct* the passages of Scripture met with so as to bring them into conformity with the text current in

their own time. Hence it becomes necessary, first, to ascertain what was really the original reading of any of these ancient authors before it can be used as an authority. Besides this, they frequently quoted loosely, not *verbatim*, but giving the sense in their own words. It frequently happens, however, that they quote *expressly*, that is, they notice a difference of expression between parallel places in the Gospels, or a variation between the manuscripts of their day, and comment upon it. In such cases their opinion is of the highest value, particularly in the case of Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, who were all eminent scholars and gave abundant labor to the criticism of the text.

By these three means, manuscripts, versions, and Patristic quotations, the text is determined. Certain *canons* of criticism have been put forth by which the external evidence thus furnished is to be weighed, and certain other canons in regard to the value of internal evidence, of which, also, due account requires to be taken. Under this system there is a quite general agreement as to the true text among critical scholars, although many unimportant, and a very few important variations are still to be found in their editions. The work of criticising the text is far from being mechanical, and requires at once scholarship, experience, and sagacity ; its results

are generally reliable, and it is the part of the interpreter generally to accept them as the basis of his exegesis; but sometimes, when the critics differ, or when authorities are closely balanced, he must exercise his own judgment, and needs to have a fair knowledge of the principles of textual criticism, that he may exercise it intelligently.

The subject is discussed in the *prolegomena* of the various critical editions of the Greek New Testament, in articles in introductions and Bible dictionaries, especially in that of Smith in the American edition. There are also special works on the subject, among which may be mentioned that of F. H. Scrivener, "A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament," in its second and much improved edition, and the smaller works of C. E. Hammond, "Outlines of Textual Criticism applied to the New Testament," and "The Principles of Textual Criticism" by the author, originally published in the "Bibliotheca Sacra" for April, 1875, but subsequently thoroughly revised and issued both separately and as an appendix to his "Greek Harmony of the Gospels."

## II. TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

We are here upon very different ground; the text itself is far more ancient than in the case

of the New Testament, and the data for its criticism are far more modern both absolutely and relatively. There are but few manuscripts older than the twelfth century of our era. Of these few none go back to an earlier date than the ninth century, unless it be one of the Pentateuch brought from Derbend in Daghestan to Odessa, which purports, by its subscription, to have been written before A. D. 580. Manuscripts of the Old Testament, therefore, only help us to ascertain what is known as the Masoretic text, and do not directly indicate what may have been its earlier condition. The principal authorities for the readings of the MSS. are the works of Kennicott<sup>1</sup> and De Rossi.<sup>2</sup> The various readings of both works were condensed and printed in a new edition of the Hebrew Bible by Reineccius, published by D. I. C. Doederlein and J. H. Meisner, Leipsic, 1793, reprinted at Halle, 1818. The more important readings of Kennicott and De Rossi, together with a collation of the readings of the Samaritan, Septuagint, Chaldee, Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic, and other critical material may be found in the valuable edition of the Hebrew Bible by the learned

<sup>1</sup> *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum variis lectionibus*, two vols., fol., Oxon., 1776-80.

<sup>2</sup> *Variae lectiones Veteris Testamenti*, four vols., 4to, Parmæ, 1784-87.

Boothroyd, in two vols. 4to, Pontefract, 1810-1816. More recently, important work has been undertaken by Baer and Delitzsch, availing themselves of all the facilities and scholarship of the day. They have already published critical editions of Genesis, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah, the Minor Prophets, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezekiel, Chronicles, and the five Megilloth.

The compilation of the Masora is said to have begun in the sixth or seventh century, and to have extended to the tenth or eleventh. The Masora is a collection of observations and of oral traditions concerning the text. It is concerned with a small number of various readings then known to exist, with an enumeration of the numbers of verses, words, and letters, and observations about them, and especially with the vocalization and accentuation of the text. While these matters often determine the sense of the text in detail, they do not touch at all upon larger corruptions which are known certainly to have existed then, and which continue to the present time.

Earlier than the Masora is the Talmud. This is composed essentially of two parts, the Mishna, or text, compiled by R. Judah, the holy, who died about A. D. 220, and the Gemara, or commentary in its twofold form, the Jerusalem, belonging to

the close of the fourth century, and the Babylonian, about a century later. The Talmud, like the *Masora*, notices a few emendations required in the text, but is chiefly valuable as attesting the scrupulous care with which the text at the time was guarded. It will be seen from these statements how very little there remains of data for the direct criticism of the text.

Turning next to versions, we have those already mentioned in the chapter on the original languages. The oldest of these is the Samaritan, but it extends only through the *Pentateuch*, and is separated from its original by 1,000 years. It is of some value as a witness to the text of the *Pentateuch* at the time of the translation, but of course can throw no light upon the corruptions of the previous millennium, and the independent accuracy of our present copies needs further critical examination. The various readings of the Samaritan text were carefully examined by *Gesenius* in 1815, and his conclusions, depriving these variations of any considerable weight, have been generally sustained by scholars since that time. The Samaritan *Pentateuch* (both the text and the version) is printed in the Samaritan character in the *Paris Polyglot* and in that of *Walton*, and also separately in *Chaldee* characters, edited by *Blayney* (Oxon., 1790). Its readings, as already noted,

may be found in Boothroyd's Hebrew Bible, and also in a series of articles in the "Bibliotheaca Sacra."<sup>1</sup>

Next to this chronologically, but of more importance both critically and exegetically, is the Septuagint. This translation was the work of the Jews of Alexandria, and was at least begun in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, about B. C. 280. It is uncertain whether more than the Pentateuch was at first translated, but it is clear that the translation of this is much better than of the later books. The version gives internal evidence of having been prepared from a Hebrew text without vowel points or division between the words. Where, therefore, it gives sufficient evidence of fidelity it may represent an earlier tradition in regard to the vocalization than has been preserved in the Masoretic text, and thus becomes an important authority, particularly in cases where there are conflicting readings in the present Hebrew MSS. The same thing may also be said in some cases in regard to the interchange of similar Hebrew letters and even of the transposition of letters. Noted instances of this are in Psalm xxii. 17 (LXX. xxi. 16) where the printed Hebrew is כָּרְבָּי; but several MSS. read בָּרְכָּי, and the LXX. has ὥρυξαν χεῖράς μου καὶ πόδας μου, and Aquila, too,

<sup>1</sup> *Bibliotheaca Sacra*, xxxiii., 265, 533; xxxiv., 79; xxxv., 76, 309.

(although with a variety in the MSS.) reads  $\eta\sigma\chi\nu\nu\nu\nu$ . In Psalm xvi. 10 “the printed text is חסידיך in the plural; but near 269 MSS. (or more than half of the whole known number) have the singular חסידך, which is clearly confirmed by the evidence of the Septuagint, οὐδε δώσεις τὸν ὄστιον σου ἵδειν διαφθοράν.” This reading is confirmed by all the ancient versions as well as by Acts ii. 27, xiii. 35. It is to be remembered, however, that the Septuagint has often varied from the Hebrew intentionally, as in the change from the seventh day to the sixth in Gen. ii. 2; and also that, since it was for a long time the version of the Old Testament in common use among Christians, and publicly read in the churches, its text has been corrected in some instances from the New Testament, as, *e. g.*, in Psalms xiv. (LXX. xiii.) altered to conform to the quotation in Rom. iii. 10–18, which is really a combination of quotations from Psalms xiv. and liii. (LXX. lii.). A thoroughly critical edition of the Septuagint is still a desideratum.

Besides the Complutensian (contained in the Antwerp and Paris Polyglots) and the Aldine editions, there are two principal recensions of the text of the Septuagint: the Vatican, which is published in Walton’s Polyglot and followed in most modern editions, was accurately edited by Bos, with various readings and other critical

apparatus, in two vols., 4to, 1709 ; and the Alexandrine, carefully edited by Grabe and subsequently republished with the variations of the Vatican and of three MSS. at Basle, and critical dissertations, by Breitinger, four vols., 4to, 1730. The most convenient and accessible modern edition is the last one of Tischendorf, in two vols., 8vo, 1856. It follows the Vatican text, but gives the various readings of the Alexandrine, and other critical matter, and, especially, it gives in an appendix the Septuagint version of Daniel, in addition to that of Theodotion, which in that book, has commonly supplanted it. More recent and of great value is Field's edition of what has been recovered of Origen's Hexapla.<sup>1</sup>

What is known of the other Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion may be found in this work of Field's. Although these versions were all subsequent to the Christian era, they are yet much more ancient than the present Masoretic text.

Next in order among the versions are to be placed the Chaldee *Targums* or paraphrases. After the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, although at precisely what time is uncertain, the Hebrew had become a dead lan-

<sup>1</sup> *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ supersunt.* F. Field. 2 vols., 4to, Oxon.. 1875.

guage to such a degree that it was found desirable to have the Scriptures interpreted in Chaldee, as they were read in the original in the synagogues. These more or less paraphrastic translations were, for a long time, not allowed to be committed to writing, but were handed down by oral tradition. The *Targumists* themselves were held in little esteem, and their interpretations were considered in their own time as of no scholarly value. They often deviate intentionally from the text for purposes of explanation, and are therefore of more value as witnesses to the ancient interpretation than of the ancient text. Nevertheless, with careful and judicious use, they are not without value in the criticism of the text, since they probably began to be committed to writing before the close of the second century, although the oldest of them, in its present form, is perhaps a century and a half later. The most important are known as those of *Onkelos* on the Pentateuch (by far the most literal), of *Jonathan Ben Uzziel*, and the *Jerusalem Targum*, also on the Pentateuch; of *Jonathan Ben Uzziel* on the Prophets, and of *Joseph the Blind* on the Hagiographa. A full account of these by Emanuel Deutsch may be found in Smith's "Bible Dictionary," art. *Versions*.

The translations thus far mentioned all stand

much in need of critical labor upon their own text. When they shall have been edited with the same care as the Latin versions they will become of far more value in the criticism of the Hebrew text than they are at present; meantime they are to be used only with extreme caution.

The remaining versions have already been spoken of under the head of the New Testament, and there is need only to mention peculiarities of them in regard to the Old Testament.

The *Vetus Latina* exists only in fragments; Jerome revised it by comparison with the Septuagint, and of this revision only the books of Job and of Psalms have come down to us. Afterwards, he made a new translation of the whole Old Testament directly from the Hebrew, the work occupying fourteen years and being, in some of the books, particularly those of Samuel and Malachi, made with great care and with repeated revisions, while others, as the three books ascribed to Solomon, were hastily executed. Fortunately, he has preserved in his prefaces to the several books an account of the care bestowed upon them, and his work becomes a most important testimony to the Hebrew text as it existed at the close of the fifth century. The distinction between Jerome's work on the Old and the New Testaments is to be borne in mind, — that while the latter was a *revision*, the former was a *new translation*.

The so-called *Peshito* Syriac was made (with the possible exception of the Psalms) directly from the Hebrew at a far earlier date. It appears to have been already ancient in the time of Ephrem Syrus in the fourth century and is generally supposed to have closely followed the first promulgation of Christianity among a Syriac-speaking people. It probably belongs to the second century. It is printed in the Paris and London Polyglots, and an edition, prepared by Professor Lee from a collation of MSS. (without, however, giving the authorities) was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society at London, 1823. Since then a considerable amount of critical material has been accumulated by Dr. Cureton, but still awaits publication. The value of this version is great on account of its antiquity, of the general good state of its text, and of its being in a cognate dialect. There is also a later version called the *Syro-Hexaplar*, made from the Hexaplar Greek text.

The Armenian and Coptic versions of the Old Testament were made from the Septuagint.

It is thus seen that the *apparatus criticus* for the criticism of the text of the Old Testament is both meagre and modern as compared with that available in the New. A resort, therefore, to conjectural criticism is justified in the former

case to an extent which would not be allowable in the latter. Yet even here it requires to be used with the utmost caution and only in cases where the text, as it stands, is in manifest error, and where probable evidence for its correction may be drawn from the Scriptures themselves or other undoubted authority. For example : in 1 Chr. vi. 28 (in the Hebrew, verse 13) we read in the A. V., "The sons of Samuel ; the firstborn Vashni, and Abiah." Correctly translated this would read, "The sons of Samuel ; the firstborn and the second Abiah ;" it is plain that a name has here dropped out of the text which may be supplied by turning to 1 Sam. viii. 2, where we read, "The name of the firstborn was Joel ; and the name of the second, Abiah." In 1 Sam. xiii. 1 it is said, "Saul reigned one year ; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose," etc. Even the English translation is suggestive of something faulty in the text ; but the Hebrew, rendered according to the analogy of all other similar statements, reads, "Saul was year old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel." The numerals representing Saul's age at the commencement of his reign, and the number for the tens in the length of his reign have evidently dropped out of the text, and we have no certain data for supplying them. If both these

numbers should be conjectured to be thirty, it would agree well with the general history of Saul as to his age at his accession and would make his whole reign thirty-two years. The latter term, added to the seven and a half years in which the Israelites adhered to the house of Saul before recognizing David, would also agree with the forty years assigned to Saul before David became king, in *Acts xiii. 21*. But it is far easier in such cases to detect the error than to correct it with certainty.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INTERPRETER.

THE preparation of the interpreter in regard to knowledge having been set forth in the previous chapters, it is still necessary to say something of the preparation requisite in regard to his own mental condition. This cannot, indeed, be altogether separated from his religious preparation already spoken of in Chapter VII.; it is, nevertheless, a distinct point, and consists so largely in habits of mind which can be formed and controlled, that it demands at least a brief treatment as essential to the success of the exegete. The subject naturally falls into several parts, of which may be placed first,

#### I. WILLINGNESS TO TAKE TROUBLE.

This is essential to all serious and worthy acquisition in everything; conscientious and pains-taking labor is the necessary condition of all work of real value to ourselves or others, but it needs here to be especially insisted upon. It is exceedingly easy, on the one side, to take

interpretations at second hand, and to fall into a system devised by others, without serious examination as to whether it is true or not ; and on the other side, to dash off, without system, into whatever interpretations may strike the fancy at the moment, or may happen to fall in with preconceived notions. Hence, it seems to many lost labor to spend time and thought and prayer, either on the elaboration of general principles of interpretation which shall guide us in particular cases, or, when those particular cases arise, to consider whether our interpretation is in accordance with such principles as have been already established. Has it not been already pointed out, it may be asked, that the humble and devout Christian will often reach a more true and just interpretation of the essential teaching of Scripture than one who approaches it in a wrong spirit, although fortified with all the learning dwelt upon in the preceding pages ? This is very true ; but, on the one hand, it is to be remembered that such a person not only comes to the Scriptures with deep and usually long preparation in the most important point of all, — the spiritual preparation of the heart ; and on the other, that such persons usually confine themselves in their interpretations to the broad features and the essential teachings of Scripture, and that, when they have presumed to go beyond

this, and interpret passages of difficulty, they have not infrequently furnished as sad instances as the world has ever seen of strange distortions of the truth. But again, another may say: Such or such a commentator was far more learned than I can ever hope to be; why am I not safer and more likely to be right in taking his opinions and following them throughout, than in attempting to find out the meaning of the Scriptures for myself? Such an inquiry may be readily answered by simply putting into the hands of the inquirer another commentary, proceeding from a person of a different school of thought, and pointing out to him the total divergence between them in their whole treatment of the word of God. Which of them shall he follow? Whichever he chooses, he can be himself but a partisan, a man whose thoughts and opinions are not his own, incompetent of forming an independent interpretation, and who cannot even have an opinion at all until he has ascertained, directly or indirectly, what his self-adopted master would have him think. If any reader is content to occupy such a position, he may as well lay aside this or any other aid in the acquisition of truth; they are not meant for those who are willing to think only the thoughts of others. But still a third person may say: With such a fair general knowledge of Scrip-

ture as any habitual reader of it may be supposed to possess, and with such aid as one may easily obtain from an occasional reference to one or two good commentaries, why can I not interpret the Bible sufficiently well for all practical purposes, except, possibly, in a few passages of special difficulty, which in any event it would be wiser for me to let alone? Certainly, a large part of mankind must be content to rely on their general knowledge of the Scriptures, with such aid as they can find in one or two good commentaries, and, on the whole, they are thus able to explain the Scriptures sufficiently for the common purposes of life with good and useful effect. But this is not to be an exegete: let such an one have added to the preparation described a knowledge of Greek, and every one can see how greatly his power of understanding the New Testament will be increased. For example, it is impossible for one to learn at second hand the precise use and meaning of the word δικαιοσύνη as used in the Epistle to the Romans; and without a clear conception of the exact force of that pivotal word, it is equally impossible for him fully to appreciate the masterly argument of that epistle. The same thing may be said in its degree of the knowledge of Hebrew, of the knowledge of history, of the knowledge of geography, of natural science, and of all the other

matters touched upon in the previous pages. And more than this: exegesis is an art requiring special study, and he who neglects this study can never know whether his interpretation of a particular passage is based either upon right principles or upon a right application of them. In general, in answer to all these attempts to reach a knowledge of the meaning of the word of God by any short and easy method, it may be replied, that while there is nothing of which an accurate and true knowledge can be acquired without trouble, it is least of all possible in regard to that book in which the Infinite and the finite meet together, and the Almighty instructs man concerning His will and His truth. Such accurate knowledge may not be always necessary for practical purposes; but without it one who undertakes to expound the word of truth is always walking upon uncertain ground, not knowing even where the danger lies, and is liable when he least thinks it to be found in error. And this trouble must be taken *personally*; it will not suffice to rely upon others.

This, then, is the first essential in the mental attitude of the exegete: he must be willing to take trouble, first, in preparing himself for his work generally, and then in the careful examination of each passage which he undertakes to interpret. What an amount of trashy morality

has been thrust upon the world from simply not observing that the meaning of *έγκράτεια* is *self-control* rather than *temperance* in the ordinary modern acceptation of that word. What touching force is added to the threefold questioning and answer of St. Peter (John xxi. 15–17) by the varying use of the words *ἀγαπάω* and *φιλέω*, the distinction between which we cannot express in English. In Luke xxiii. 15, how much clearer is the true text, “No, nor yet Herod, for he sent Him back to us,” than that followed in the A. V., “For I sent you to him.” These are but instances of a thousand passages, many of them of importance, in which the true sense yields only to careful examination. The question of our Lord’s journeying beyond the boundaries of Palestine turns upon the authenticity of a preposition in Mark vii. 31; that of the whole length of His ministry on earth, chiefly upon the determination of what feast is intended in John v. 1.

## II. A JUDICIAL STATE OF MIND.

Besides taking trouble to ascertain the meaning of his text, the exegete must cultivate that impartial, well-balanced, and judicial habit of mind which can alone enable him to come to correct conclusions from his evidence when he has it before him. It is notorious that every one

who goes to the Scriptures with a preconceived view or system in his mind, is sure to find that view confirmed, however contradictory these views may be in the case of different individuals. This fairness of mind is not an easy acquisition to most persons ; for it is in opposition to all prejudice and partisanship. It requires a study of the Scriptures for the sole purpose of ascertaining what they have to say, without regard either to what we suppose they will say, or to what we wish that they might say. The insertion of the “if” in the English translation of Heb. vi. 6, and x. 26, if it be understood, as is often done, to imply a doubt of the possibility of the condition described, may serve to show how extremely difficult it is, even for men of most honest intentions, to avoid being warped in their interpretations by theological views already adopted. Of course the mind of an intelligent man cannot be a mere blank, and when he comes to the systematic study of the Divine word he will have many opinions already formed ; but if he keeps before himself the importance of the state of mind now insisted upon, and tries habitually and honestly to learn what Scripture teaches of itself and not what he can make it teach, these opinions, in so far as they may chance to be erroneous, will gradually be corrected ; and, in so far as they are just, will find

a sure foundation on which to rest. Convictions, perhaps deeply cherished, may thus come to be changed ; but, as he must always prefer the Divine will to his own, so he must prefer the fair sense of the Divine word to his own opinion. Perfect honesty thus becomes an essential qualification of the interpreter, and he can never allow himself to “handle the word of God deceitfully” for the sake of removing difficulties or for any other object. What is really God’s word must be true ; and if the ark seem to totter, it cannot be stayed by the hand of human casuistry. It is not honest to slur over difficulties, or to attempt to hide them in a mere cloud of words. It is a pitiable exhibition when a modern commentator attempts to explain the discrepancies between Ezra ii. and Neh. vii., in the census of the returning captives, by saying, that if we omit in Ezra all the numbers in excess of those in Nehemiah, and then in Nehemiah all those in excess of Ezra, and add the residues, we shall have identical results ! On the other hand, it is as unworthy to reject all reasonable solution of difficulties, lest one should by any means fall into untrustworthy conventionalities. The danger is considerable on either side ; only by a judicial fairness can both be avoided.

## III. COMMON SENSE AND SAGACITY.

“Common sense” is the art of applying to our own opinions or actions the verdict of the common intelligence of mankind. As it is one of the rarest, so it is one of the most important of the personal qualifications of the interpreter. The judicial habit of mind, spoken of in the last section, will go far towards securing the exercise of common sense in interpretation ; yet something more is needed. One may be fair in his judgment without sufficient breadth of view to take in all the elements which ought to affect his decision. “Common sense” or “sagacity” in interpretation requires a ready appreciation of everything which ought to be considered, as well as a fair proportioning of influence to each of them. It is a rare, but most important, qualification of the good exegete, and its attainment is to be diligently sought. The means of gaining it are the same as those by which a sound judgment is cultivated in any other pursuit. Men differ in the degree in which they possess it, not so much by reason of difference in the original capacities of their minds as in the habits of thought to which they have accustomed themselves, and the power of self-control they have trained themselves to exercise. Particularly opposed to this excellence is the mistaken effort at

originality. True originality, here as in natural science, consists not in the finding of something absolutely new, but in drawing attention to facts not heretofore observed or not sufficiently regarded, and combining those facts naturally and truly but in combinations heretofore overlooked. For such originality there is ample room in the constant advance of knowledge in every department. It was a truly original interpretation of Matt. xxi. 2, when a traveler in Palestine observed that the Mount of Olives at the place in question is furrowed by a valley, and that, while the main road follows round its head, there is a short cut by a footpath across, with the remains of a village at the junction of the two ways on the opposite side. When, therefore, our Lord told his disciples, "Go into the village over against you," He directed them to take the footpath across the valley, and then finding the ass, to bring it along the main road to meet Him. But it is an utterly false and mischievous originality which either takes a passage out of its connection and fastens upon it some unheard-of meaning, as is often done by the extreme school of typologists; or which presupposes some fanciful theory, as that of the opposing theology of Peter and Paul, and then forces the sense of Scripture to its support. True originality, here as elsewhere, is the result not of an exuberant

fancy, but of hard and intelligent work, and of this originality common sense must be the test. That which is original in the right sense in interpretation, as everywhere, must be, like the egg of Columbus, something which, once pointed out, can be seen and approved by every man possessed of the necessary data for forming an opinion. The sagacity by which a great general wins a battle is not usually displayed in new devices, but in so grasping the whole circumstances of the situation, and so disposing his forces in view of them, that, when the struggle is over, every one can see that the battle must have been won. Correspondingly, the difficulties of the exegete are to be overcome, not so much by an exercise of ingenuity, as by so bringing circumstances and facts and context to bear upon the exact language of the text that the difficulty, as it were, resolves itself. This is the height of exegetical sagacity, and is the outcome of a full preparation for the work, of painstaking labor, and of a judicial attitude of mind under the guidance of COMMON SENSE.

#### IV. REVERENCE.

Finally, with all these qualifications, it is necessary that the interpreter should approach his work and should carry it on at every stage with reverence. Of course this is a necessary result

from the nature of the material, the inspired word of God, on which the exegete is expected to work; but the proposition needs to be considered, both to show its use, and to guard against its abuse. The character of the Bible, as the revelation of God, requires that its interpretation should be undertaken with a distinct consciousness and continual recollection of this fact; in other words, that we here stand in the presence of the teachings of the Infinite. This not only gives seriousness and importance to the work, but also furnishes the clue to the solution of some otherwise insoluble difficulties. Reference must be again made to the Introduction to show how essentially this fact modifies the whole of Scripture. But, aside from this, we find everywhere that reverence is one of the most positive requirements of the Supreme Being, and, therefore, without this we are not likely to interpret His word acceptably to Him. When the prophet was sent to declare an important message from on high, he saw in vision the Almighty seated upon a throne with the seraphim standing before Him. They had each six wings, but used two of them to veil their faces and two to veil their feet in expression of their reverence, leaving only one third of their powers to be employed in the active execution of their Maker's commands (Isa. vi. 1, 2). For us it may not be

necessary to hold in abeyance anything of the power given ; but it is necessary that all should be employed with the same sense of the profound holiness and truth and love of Him whose word we seek to interpret. While thus saved from many a false interpretation, we shall be led to look for and to find a depth and fullness of meaning which might otherwise be overlooked.

On the other hand, nothing can be more foolish than to attempt to find deep mysteries in the simplest historical events and profound types in the necessary accessories of the Divine commands. Such trifling with the Divine word, common enough from the days of Clement of Alexandria to our own, is not reverential, but irrational ; and the Divine requirement is ever that our service must be a *reasonable* service. In the work of the interpreter, dogmatism often seeks to screen itself under the cloak of reverence. Centuries ago the attempt to determine the true character of the New Testament dialect was stoutly resisted as irreverent ; a generation ago the same ground was taken — and is not yet wholly given up — against every effort to restore as far as possible the original words of Holy Writ by the application of textual criticism. In the more especial department of exegesis, history shows many a shallow interpreter seeking to hide his ignorance of the real meaning of the

sacred record under the mask of reverence, while on the other hand, examples are not wanting of a true reverence denounced as superstition. The difficulty presses with peculiar force in the region where exegesis blends with doctrinal theology. Here true reverence can never be content that a doctrine should rest upon a false support; yet, if a conventional proof text is shown by a careful exegesis to have no relation to the doctrine in question, a cry is sure to be raised that the doctrine itself is attacked and must be defended from the rash hands irreverently laid upon it. Reverence for a merely human past is often mistaken for reverence for God's word, and a change in an interpretation, necessitated by the advance in philology and in all knowledge, is too apt to be regarded as a proposal to change the Scripture itself.

Nevertheless, true reverence must show itself in the honest and manly effort to ascertain what is the meaning which the Holy Spirit meant to convey through the language of the Scripture writer. Whoever does this, may be assured if he goes on, under an abiding sense of the great realities with which he has to do, that his effort is well pleasing to the Majesty on high, and, in so far as it is true to its purpose, will endure to His glory.

## PART II.

### THE ART OF INTERPRETING.

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#### CHAPTER XI.

##### PRELIMINARY.

WE have now to consider the actual work of the interpreter in ascertaining the meaning of the Bible. It is not to be supposed that, practically, his preparation and his work can be separated as they have been in the discussion of them. Life does not suffice for the attainment of a theoretically perfect preparation ; the exegete must enter upon his work with such preparation as he has been able to attain, and his difficulties will soon suggest the importance of improving to the utmost his qualifications as he has opportunity. He should beware of so committing himself to his interpretations that their modification shall become difficult when, in the light of a fuller preparation, he may be able to see their erroneousness. He should rather begin the practice of exegesis tentatively, re-

cording his results with the reasons for them as a matter of self-education, that from these essays, when they happen to prove unsuccessful, he may afterwards see the errors he is to avoid and the means by which he was led to commit them ; and when, in the light of farther knowledge and skill in practice, they prove successful, they may become an encouragement and help to farther progress. When he shall find, after some years of growing preparation, that his general system of interpretation still commends itself to his own mind, and that in particular cases, in which no new facts have come to his attention, his views are still satisfactory, he may fairly conclude that he has entered upon the right road, and that henceforth his skill in interpretation will be proportioned to his practice and his information and to his care in bringing these to bear upon the subject before him.

In the following chapters the same general order will be observed as in those which have gone before, *i. e.*, the principle will be, to begin with the *general* and advance to the *special*. This is the reverse of the course usually pursued in works on hermeneutics, and is made possible by having already considered the required preparation of the exegete. If one were to undertake the interpretation of a particular passage without any knowledge of the subject, it would be

necessary for him to build up a knowledge piece-meal, beginning of course with the most elementary details ; he would be obliged first to determine the text, and then to make himself familiar with the meaning of the words and the structure of the language, and thence go on step by step to wider considerations of context, etc. But the interpreter who comes to his work with full preparation is in a different position, and is able to take it up in whatever may be really the best way. In deciding upon what is that best way, regard must be had to the universal law of nature which puts the general before the special, and marks all progress as a course of successive specializations. The tyro in natural history must first study his many individual specimens and group them successively into species, genera, families, etc., following the ascending order, and this is of necessity the general rule for the acquisition of knowledge ; but the knowledge having once been acquired and thoroughly incorporated into the treasures of the mind, the reverse order is to be followed, often more or less unconsciously. The well instructed naturalist, on taking in hand a new object, observes at a glance to which kingdom of nature it belongs, and to which order and family, and afterwards more carefully examines its generic and specific characteristics, following the historic order. In the

same way the chemist must in his studies first acquire a knowledge of the properties of bodies; but when he is prepared for an analysis, he begins his work by observing certain characteristic reactions which determine to which of several groups of substances the body in question belongs, and then identifies it successively as a member of smaller and smaller groups until he brings it down at last to its own characteristic reactions. The same is true of every other branch of natural study; and a like course is to be followed in exegesis: first, acquire the necessary knowledge by building up from details, and then in applying that knowledge, reverse the order, and proceed from the more general to the more special. This more general knowledge, as in the case of the student of natural history, will very often be unconsciously applied; at whatever stage, however, the process is consciously taken up, the student must begin with the more general of the considerations which are to be taken into account. As in reading a letter in an obscure handwriting, we first aim to obtain a knowledge of the general drift, and then of the particular sentence as an aid in determining a difficult word; so in exegesis, we ascertain the general purpose of the writer, the scope of the context, the grammatical structure, before we determine the exact shade of meaning of a particular word.

It is not to be denied that there is a certain danger in this method against which the student requires to be absolutely on his guard. He must beware of making up his mind beforehand, from general considerations, what the text *ought to say*. In this respect, as in every other, he must bring to his interpretation an unprejudiced mind, seeking only to know what the text does say, and not what he would wish it to say. The illustrations which will be given in the following chapters will sufficiently show how the more general should be brought to bear upon the more special. It is never to determine the meaning beforehand, but only to enable us rightly to decide between different interpretations which the words alone might possibly bear ; to ascertain the circumstances under which they were written ; the general purpose of the writer's mind ; and, in a word, to put ourselves as much as possible in the writer's position and understand his words as he intended to use them.

This danger, however, is believed to be far less than that attending the opposite course, where the tendency, as shown by experience as well as by theory, is to exaggerate the importance of minutiae, and, between different possible meanings, to adopt that which seems in the detail as perhaps slightly the more probable, with such tenacity as to render the interpreter blind to more important considerations.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE APPLICATION OF THE GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

HERE, as throughout this part of the work, the principles to be observed can best be conveyed by means of examples. Let us suppose the exegete proceeding to interpret some point on which a difference of opinion has existed, and on which he wishes to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, based on sufficient evidence. We are to consider here only examples which depend for their solution upon a general knowledge of the Scriptures.

Let us take, as a first illustration, the number of the Israelites at their exodus from Egypt. This is stated in Ex. xii. 37 at 600,000 men, giving, according to the ordinary proportion, somewhere about 2,500,000 as the whole number of the Israelites at this time. But this number involves certain obvious difficulties. The total number of Jacob's family who went down into Egypt 215 years before is given in Gen. xlvi. 27 and Ex. i. 5 as seventy, and a natural increase in that time from the one number to the

other is plainly impossible. Further, the nature of the country in which the “wanderings of the wilderness” occurred, plainly made the support of such a vast host for forty years impracticable by any natural means. On the other hand, it is well known that simple statements of numbers are especially exposed to the errors of the scribes in the repeated copying of MSS., and that several such errors do actually occur. In view of these facts some critics have been disposed to reduce the number of men to 60,000 or even to 6,000. Whether such a reduction is allowable, or even possible, and also whether there is any real ground for suspecting error, must be determined from a general knowledge of the whole history to which this particular statement belongs. In the first place, the number itself is so repeatedly restated and checked in a variety of ways that it is impossible there should have been any merely accidental error. Within about a year from this time a military census was taken of the people by their tribes, and in Num. i. the result is given for each tribe separately (verses 20-43), as well as the sum total (verse 46). In the following chapter an account is given of the separation of the whole host into four marching divisions, in which the number of each tribe is again stated, and also the whole number of each division (ii. 1-24), and then again the sum total

of the whole (verse 32). Thirty-eight years later a similar census was again taken, and is recorded again for each tribe separately, and also the sum total (Num. xxvi. 5-51). There are, besides, a great many other checks upon the number, as in the census of the Levites, the record of the numbers who fell under the various judgments, etc. It is plain, therefore, that the number, if not correct, must have been intentionally and systematically changed. The next inquiry must be in regard to the number who went down into Egypt. This we find variously stated; in Gen. xlvi. 26 as sixty-six, in the following verse as seventy, in Acts vii. 14 (from the Septuagint) as seventy-five; on examining the list of names in Gen. xlvi. 8-25, it is seen at once that the number is merely conventional, including some who were not born at the time referred to, and that it is in fact a list of the heads of the families of Egypt, consisting, indeed, chiefly of those who actually went down at that time, but also including others in the national annals who were considered as entitled to like honor. This might have been stated at the pleasure of the writer at either of the figures mentioned, or at still some other sum not greatly divergent. It is next observed that no names of wives are mentioned, and hence, in a question of increase of population, the original seventy is to be at once

doubled. Again, we read in Gen. xiv. 14, that Abraham had in his household 318 servants able to go forth to war, and that, according to the Divine command to him and to his posterity, all these were circumcised (Gen. xvii. 12-14, 27). The whole narrative shows that the family riches did not diminish in passing to Isaac and to Jacob; and all their male servants must have been brought into the covenant of circumcision. When Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt, they took with them all their possessions, including their flocks and herds (Gen. xlvi. 5, 6; xlvii. 1), and it is certain that they must have taken their servants with them, both because of the need of them in the care of their flocks, and because they could not have left them behind unprovided for in the famine-stricken land. They were all alike a foreign people to the Egyptians, and must have been all classed together when the time of oppression came on, and, having the common bond of circumcision, it is evident that they would have been regarded as Israelites by the Israelites themselves as well as by the Egyptians, and have been accounted to the various tribes with which they were connected. It is thus found that the number at the start was several hundred instead of merely seventy, and the increase presents no very remarkable phenomenon.

Next in regard to their long march in the

wilderness : had the number been quite small this would have been not only possible but altogether natural, as we find that corresponding numbers of nomadic tribes always have and do still succeed in finding a support in the same region. But the whole story of the Exodus, and especially the feeding of the people, is represented as impossible by natural means, and, therefore, as miraculous. This is not the place to discuss the credibility of the supernatural ; we must accept this in any reasonable system of Scripture interpretation. The whole story is thus self-consistent. The numbers would not have been possible without the miracles ; the miracles would not have been required without the numbers.

Still further : the conquest of Canaan is represented as that of a number of large, powerful, and warlike tribes, in possession of fortified cities, and to a considerable extent acting in alliance with one another. The conquest, as it was, was only accomplished by effective assistance from on high ; but to a much smaller number it would have been absolutely impossible without an extent of miraculous interposition of which there is no record. On the whole, therefore, it must be concluded that while the number cannot be an accidental error, it has no improbability in itself, and that some such number is actually required by the whole history taken together.

Let us now take an example of a different kind, which has already been spoken of in another connection. It is recorded in Mark ii. 23-28, that our Lord was accused by the Pharisees of a breach of the Sabbath because He allowed His disciples on that day to pluck and eat the ears of grain as they passed through the field. He defended his course by the example of David, who "went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him." In this passage there is needed a general knowledge of Scripture, first, to understand accurately the ground of the accusation, then, to remove a difficulty, and, finally, to appreciate the peculiar appropriateness and force of the reply.

For the first, there was no harm in the act of the disciples itself, independently of the day on which it was done. The law was explicit: "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn" (Deut. xxiii. 25). The offense charged was only an offense against the sanctity of the day, and a careful examination of the whole Mosaic legislation shows that no precept of the Divine law

itself was violated, but only the current Pharisaical interpretation of it. For the defense of the disciples it was only necessary to show that this interpretation was unauthorized. Our Lord, however, wished to go farther than this, and to show that, even in the case of an exact and definite precept, technicalities must give way to necessity, and that the observance of a commandment in detail must yield to the fulfillment of the broader purposes for which the law was given. He therefore selected an instance in which the precept was not only definite and express, but one in which the observance might seem a necessary part of the whole symbolism of the Old Testament ritual. The shewbread was undoubtedly offered as a part of the symbol of the consecration to God of all the gifts of the people. It was "most holy," and to be eaten by the priests alone as His representatives, in token of its acceptance and of His communion with His people (*Lev. xxiv. 9*). Nevertheless, no Jew of the time of Christ would have dared to condemn either David or Ahimelech for their violation of the law under the circumstances. Hence the argument against them was made conclusive by a simple appeal to this precedent.

The difficulty in regard to the name of the high priest has already been treated.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vide p. 78.*

But there was a peculiar appropriateness in our Lord's answer which is apt to escape the casual reader. The shewbread was required by the law (Lev. xxiv. 8) to be renewed every Sabbath. Now it appears from the narrative (1 Sam. xxi. 6) that when David came to the high priest this bread had just been taken away to make room for the hot bread that day put in its place. This act of justifiable violation of the letter of the law was, therefore, also on the Sabbath, and not only so, but the flight of David and his companions, by a far longer way than "a Sabbath day's journey," was also on that day. If the Pharisees chose to bear all these facts in mind, our Lord's reply to them must have been indeed unanswerable.

One other brief illustration may be allowed. In 1 Cor. x. 4, Paul says that the Israelites "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." He is arguing the insufficiency of merely external privileges to make man acceptable to God or secure his salvation. He proves this by the example of the Israelites of old. An obvious reply might be made by urging the distinction in the privileges and the efficacy of the old and the new covenants. The Apostle meets this by showing that of old, as now, the one Source of spiritual blessing was the same, — Christ. Is this true?

It certainly is ; but to establish its truth nothing less will suffice than to take in the whole compass of Scripture teaching. It is necessary to show that God Himself, in His own essence, is unapproachable, and has never been seen of man ; that He is, and can be, manifested only through a Mediator ; that there is but one Mediator, even Christ, between God and man ; and hence that He who manifested Himself to, and sustained, the Israelites in the wilderness is necessarily one with Him to whom the Christian looks for salvation.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE PARTICULAR BOOK.

BESIDES a general knowledge of the Bible as a whole, the interpreter needs a special knowledge of the particular book with which he is to be immediately concerned. The bearing of this knowledge upon his interpretation varies considerably with the nature of the book, and is sometimes of more, sometimes of less, importance ; but is always an element of far too great weight to be neglected, and is in some cases really invaluable. In the historical books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles it might seem sufficient to be familiar with the general character of the histories of the time ; but it will be found necessary for the proper understanding of Chronicles to consider, also, the circumstances and needs of the people at the time of the return from the captivity, for only thus can its insertions and omissions, as compared with the other books, be explained. In the same way in the case of the Synoptic Gospels ; these Gospels have certain common characteristics which may be considered together, and which ought to be thoroughly

studied ; but one may go far astray, not only in chronological arrangement, but also in the interpretation of particular passages, unless he take into account the peculiarities of each of the Evangelists, recognizing, *e. g.*, Matthew's tendency to group like things together, such as the parables of our Lord, miracles, discourses ; and St. Luke's care to narrate each incident in connection with the circumstances under which it occurred.

Let us select, for illustration, one book from the Old and one from the New Testament. Genesis is the most ancient of the former, and would present serious difficulties if looked upon as an original continuous history. It is, on the contrary, a compilation from more ancient documents, and however these have sometimes been woven together by the compiler, they generally show distinct marks of their original independence, especially in the more ancient parts. If, now, one take up the first two chapters, he will find in each of them an account of the creation, but from quite different points of view. In the first (ending with ii. 3), there is the story of the material and the animal creation, closing with that of man ; but the main object is evidently to present a general view of the cosmogony and to assert the ultimate origin of all things from God. The object of the second, while it glances

at the creation in general, is plainly to describe the origin and status of MAN. The two accounts, if considered as originally independent histories of the creation, looked at from different points of view, are perfectly consistent and harmonious; but regarded, as they once were, as parts of a continuous narrative, would present very strange phenomena. Along with these plain marks of original separation there is in each a uniform Divine name differing from that in the other; in the first we have אלהים some thirty times; in the second יהוה eleven times. It is unnecessary to speak of other evidences of separate documents in this book; some parts of it must have been originally written as early as or even earlier than the time of Abraham, when "the cities of the plain" were yet standing; others must have been written as late as the time of Jacob, and some isolated explanatory clauses inserted at a later date than the time of Moses. Some chapters must have been written in the locality of Egypt, others in the patriarchal times of the land of Canaan. The book can only be properly understood by keeping these facts constantly in view.

Turning now to the New Testament, almost any of the books will serve equally well for illustration. Let us select the Epistle to the Romans. To interpret rightly this most important exposi-

tion of the Christian faith it is necessary, first of all, to understand thoroughly the character, life, and spiritual experience of the great Apostle to the Gentiles up to the time when it was written ; for these enter very largely into the form in which the fundamental truths of Christianity are here presented. It is also desirable to know as much as may be of the disciples at Rome, their doctrinal needs and their experiences, as may be learned from a careful study of every mention of the names of those saluted in the last chapter of the epistle. Finally, it is absolutely necessary to have a full grasp of the great objects had in view, and of the general plan of the epistle, which can only be obtained by a repeated careful reading over of the whole consecutively. If the details of this epistle had been generally studied with this kind of preparation, it is safe to say that by far the greater part of the controversies which have centred in its statements, if they had arisen at all, could never have sought support in its language. Many a bitter dispute about the doctrine of election would have vanished by attending to the general scope of the epistle and the connection of the passages, used in this controversy, with the main argument of the Apostle. The long arguments on the relative importance of faith and works would have found here no standing ground, had the scheme

of salvation, as set forth in its totality, been properly apprehended. The same thing may be said of the historic misunderstandings of the relation of the Christian to the moral law, and of many other things where the most opposite views have sought support in the strong and earnest language of St. Paul.

What is true of this epistle is true also in its degree of all the others. Many parts of the Epistle to the Hebrews become almost enigmas as soon as they are considered apart from the argument and design of the whole. While this fact is more apparent and more striking in what are called the argumentative epistles, it will not bear to be neglected in regard to those which are called practical. The interpretation of the Epistle of James particularly has grievously suffered from not approaching it with a broad and well matured view of its general purpose.

Even in the historical books in which, from their character, a general thought has less opportunity for development, the same principle, although it is not to be pressed beyond bounds, lies at the root of all satisfactory interpretation. The marked difference in tone and character between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels, is a necessary result of the declared purpose of the former (John xx. 31), and, when duly considered, brings them all into harmonious relations with each other.

This, then, may be laid down confidently as the most important guide to the interpreter in his work: after acquiring a good general knowledge of the Bible as a whole, let him next obtain the most thorough knowledge possible of the particular book which is to be the immediate subject of interpretation.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE USE OF GEOGRAPHY.

THE use of geographical knowledge in the work of interpretation depends greatly upon the character of the book which is studied. In such a book as Genesis, which contains the account of the dispersion of mankind and the journeyings of the patriarchs, or in the Acts of the Apostles, giving the story of the spread of the gospel in various regions and the missionary travels of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, it is obviously of the first importance, and very many passages can be rightly understood only by its aid ; while in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, or the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is of secondary value. Yet probably in every book there are at least allusions or figures which, if not unintelligible without it, yet become more clear and forcible by its illustrations.

Geography, or at least geographical names, must often be considered in connection with the times in which they were used. In Gen. ii. 10-14 is a careful description of the location of Paradise ; yet writers have been found to pro-

pose for it situations in almost every part of the world, forgetting that, unless the compiler of Genesis wished to mislead the people, he must have used these geographical names in the sense in which they were then commonly understood, and that two, at least, of the rivers mentioned have continued to bear the same names from a hoar antiquity. The Hiddekel (Tigris) and the Euphrates must have been the Hiddekel and the Euphrates of Moses' time. On the other hand, it is not always safe to conclude the identity of place from the identity of name, since several places may have borne the same name. Thus Cush, Sheba, Tarshish, and many more stand, in different connections, for widely separated localities. A full geographical knowledge will generally enable the interpreter to avoid confounding one with the other, and thus to avoid serious difficulties. An instructive instance is that of the place named *Dan*. In Joshua xix. 47 and in Judges xviii. 27-29 there is a circumstantial account of the capture of a certain city, Leshem or Laish, by a band of the tribe of Dan, and of their calling it "after the name of their father." Of the exact situation of the place in the extreme north of the land and at one of the sources of the Jordan, there can be no manner of doubt, and it is also as certain that its conquest and naming occurred during the period of the Judges.

But the same name, Dan, occurs as a designation of a place in the extreme north of the land in Deut. xxxiv. 1, and, also, in the same geographical connection in the story of a far more remote period (Gen. xiv. 14). Under these circumstances, the suggestion of a later date of these passages, or at least of the interpolation of this name by a later hand, is very obvious. Against this the plainly archaic character of Gen. xiv. weighs heavily, and the fact that, in that passage, several obsolete names, as Bela, Siddim, and En-mishpat, are explained is a strong evidence that Dan was at the time of the compiler a well known name which needed no explanation.<sup>1</sup> We have here a conflict of evidence, the solution of which would seem to be that the original name of Laish was Dan, and that when it was conquered by the Danites they restored the old name in honor of their ancestor; but while such a solution would remove the difficulty, it cannot be admitted without evidence. Probable evidence has now been afforded by the discovery of a sarcophagus in a tomb near Sidon with a long Phœnician inscription on its lid in

<sup>1</sup> We do not here forget the ingenious argument of Dr. Bartlett (addition to art. "Dan" in Amer. Ed. of Smith's *Bible Dictionary*) that Dan is in Gen. xiv. 14 a simple substitution by a later hand; but the evidence seems to point the other way.

which Ashmunazer, King of Sidon, records his conquest of Dor, Joppa, and “ample corn lands which are at the root of Dan.”<sup>1</sup> The inscription has been somewhat variously translated, but the proper names are believed to be reliable. The age and history of Ashmunazer are unknown, but Joshua pushed his conquest “unto great Zidon” (Joshua xi. 8), and it appears historically unlikely that any later king of Sidon should have been powerful enough to have possessed himself of these places. Thus a probability appears that the proposed solution is historically true.

The wanderings of David while outlawed by Saul can be understood only by a knowledge, not simply of the geographical position of the places mentioned, but also of the physical features of the country in which they were situated ; and several of the psalms, relating to the events of that time, have a fresh force and power if the mind is able to picture the scenery to which they refer.

Saul’s journey by night to consult the witch of Endor is to be considered with reference to the situation of his own camp and that of the Philistines, showing that it was necessary for

<sup>1</sup> Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. i., p. 201. [But *vide* last edition *Central Palestine and Phœnicia*, pp. 644, 645.]

him to pass and repass over the shoulder of the very ridge on which his enemies were posted (1 Sam. xxviii.). And the immense importance of his defeat is to be learned from the fact that, before the battle, the Philistines had succeeded in getting to the north of his army (1 Sam. xxviii. 4; xxix. 1), in a position somewhat north of the centre of the land.

A moderate knowledge of the geography of Asia Minor is enough to explain the relative positions of Miletus and Ephesus in Acts xx. 16, 17, and how it was that St. Paul could meet at the former place the elders of the church of the latter, without detention on the journey he was so anxious to accomplish.

The relative positions and the facilities of communication between Ephesus, Colosse, and Laodicea need to be understood for the explanation of several passages in Paul's Epistles, and for that of several allusions to persons living in or traveling through these cities.

But besides this geographical knowledge necessary to the interpretation of passages which have an immediate geographical connection, the well furnished interpreter requires such a thorough and general knowledge of the country in which the Biblical writers lived, as shall enable him, almost unconsciously, to enter into the geographical relations in which they were placed,

and to feel the influence of the scenery in sight of which their minds were moulded. The love of nature, and the references to nature are striking features in the sayings of many of the sacred authors. Even in the human development of Him who was more than man, may be traced the influence of His surroundings. The situation of Nazareth, in scenes of surpassing loveliness among the Galilean hills, with its exquisite views across the plain of Esdraelon and over the spurs of Carmel to the Mediterranean, needs to be understood to appreciate the beauty of nature in the midst of which He was brought up. The suddenness and the danger of the storms on the Sea of Galilee can only be appreciated by a knowledge of its situation amidst its encircling hills. The pilgrims from Galilee to the feasts at Jerusalem crossed the upper fords of the Jordan, traveled down its eastern bank, and recrossed at the fords near Jericho, thereby nearly doubling the length of their journey and greatly increasing its difficulty. This route, in comparison with the direct one through Samaria, is to be constantly kept in mind in appreciating the strength of the hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans, as well as to explain the fact of our Lord's being found at Jericho on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem. There are, indeed, writers, like Paul and his companion

Luke, whose lives were passed so largely in cities and the busiest haunts of men that they seldom allude to nature ; but this is exceptional, and of the far larger number of Scripture writers it is emphatically true, that, to appreciate their writings, it is necessary to have before the mind's eye the general coloring of the landscape on which they looked and from which they often draw their illustrations.

It can hardly be necessary to say that this knowledge should be possessed before attempting any particular work of interpretation. The interpreter may indeed stop to ascertain some special geographical details involved in the passage which may be before him ; but the acquisition of a wider knowledge would take him too long and too far from his immediate work. Indeed, it often happens that he can bring a previously acquired geographical knowledge to bear most effectively, when, but for the knowledge possessed, he might not have known that it would be of use.

A mere familiarity with distances and points of the compass is often important both positively and negatively. The situation of Bethlehem on the road from Hebron to Jerusalem, and only six miles from the latter, helps to understand why David, who was born and brought up at Bethlehem, should have established his throne

first at Hebron and then at Jerusalem (2 Sam. v. 5). But far more important is the negative fact concurring with so many others in the life and character of our Lord. He was born at Bethlehem, the city of David, whose successor He was and on whose throne He was to sit forever. Yet, much as He was at Jerusalem, we have no record of His ever having visited Bethlehem ; none of His mighty works were done there, and none of His discourses were uttered upon its hill. But of higher value than mere distances and directions are the physical features of the country. To keep to the same place for illustration : the site of Bethlehem is a limestone hill "on the summit level of the hill country of Judah, with deep gorges descending east to the Dead Sea, and west to the plains of Philistia." Here "the shepherds of Bethlehem had to contend not only with bears and lions, whose dens were in those wild wadies, but also with human enemies, — the Philistines on the west, and Arab robbers on the east. They would therefore, from childhood, be accustomed to bear fatigue, hunger, heat and cold, both by night and by day, and also to brave every kind of danger, and fight with every kind of antagonist." It was here that Joab and Abishai were trained, and the effect of such surroundings is seen in their bravery and strong characters, and also in

their hardness and self-sufficiency. In David the same natural characteristics spring from the same influence of the surroundings of his youth ; but we see how powerful was the influence of that grace which, leaving this bravery and energy to their full development, yet brought them under the control of the deepest humility, and transformed the self-dependent and self-willed warrior into one who ever looked to the will of God as the guide of his life.

It is plain that this general aid to interpretation given by geography is not to be sought from its study at the moment when one is engaged in the elucidation of a particular passage, but must have been already inwrought in the mind ; while details of distances and situation, in so far as they are not familiar, may be looked up at the moment, just as one would consult a dictionary for the meaning of a forgotten word. In either case, however, the interpreter, on taking in hand a passage, should seek to have the writer and those whom he addressed as vividly as possible before his mind in all their circumstances and surroundings ; and in the great majority of cases geography will prove one of the most important means to this end.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE USE OF HISTORY, GENERAL AND PARTICULAR.

IN the application of history to exegesis the interpreter is brought into contact with external authorities more directly than in almost any other part of his work; and in so far as the chronology of history is concerned, he will here encounter some of his most serious difficulties, requiring patient and thorough study for their solution.

The value of history is, primarily, in enabling us to understand the times in which the various books of the Bible were written, and thus the limitations and the necessities of revelation. The most careless reader can see that the sermon on the mount would have been given quite in vain to the Israelites as they came out of Egypt, and that the discourse in John xiv.-xvi. would have been entirely unadapted to the wants of those who heard with avidity the sermon on the mount. Not less true is it that to the very end of our Lord's bodily presence with

His disciples, He must tell them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12), and He points them forward to a time of higher enlightenment, "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come" (*ib.* 13); a fuller development of Christian doctrine is therefore reasonably to be looked for in the epistles than was possible at any time before the day of Pentecost. These remarks indicate that there has been a gradually increasing fullness and development of revelation, and that the Scriptures are to be interpreted in view of this fact. It would be quite unreasonable to look for either Christian knowledge, or for the conduct which can only be based on that knowledge, in the saints of the old dispensation. At the same time it is to be remembered that this process of development, which may be compared with that of evolution in nature, has not been necessarily uniform. There have been eras when it has been set forward with greatly accelerated rapidity of progress, and there have even been times when, for the sake of greater progress in the future, there has been an apparent, and even in some respects, a real set back, man having shown himself unequal to the opportunities which had been given him. Thus Paul teaches that the Scripture "preached before the Gospel unto Abraham" (Gal. iii. 8), but that after-

wards the law “was added because of transgressions” (*ib.* 19). To understand the Scripture revelation, it is, then, evidently necessary to study the history of the times in which it was given, and to become thoroughly familiar both with the opportunities and with the limitations belonging to the times of the writers.

Much, otherwise obscure in the oracles of God, will in this way become clear. It has already been pointed out in the Introduction that the Mosaic laws of revenge, of slavery, and of polygamy and divorce, were of the nature of restraining laws, leading the people from a lower condition up as far as they could bear towards a higher standard. But the educational purpose of the law is seen in very many details as well as in these great salient features. History shows that the Israelites were not yet in a condition to receive and act upon *principles*, but, spiritual children as they were, must first be prepared for these by a long pupillage under special precepts. The purpose of some of these is expressly declared in the New Testament. Thus the precept, “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox which treadeth out the corn” (Deut. xxv. 4), even as a precept of kindness and mercy, was not in the original giving of the law, but only in its recapitulation after the people had been elevated by the growing

up of a fresh generation under the advantages of the Sinaitic legislation ; but still it was even then a merely educational precept, which Paul teaches (1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18) involved a principle applicable to the spiritual laborer in the divine harvest.

It is easy to see the educational object of very many other precepts which do not happen thus to have been expressly explained in the New Testament, so that in these lesser matters, as well as in its broader features and in its types, the law was still in accordance with its general purpose, "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" (Gal. iii. 24). If any single precept were to be selected as an illustration, reference might be made, on account of its importance, to the law of ransom in Ex. xxx. 14, 15: "Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the **LORD**. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the **LORD**, to make an atonement for your souls." The great truth of the absolute equality of men before God — a truth as yet reached by no other nation, and after thousands of years of Divine teaching, still only with difficulty received under the full noontide of the Gospel — is here clearly set forth in what may fitly be called

an “object lesson” for the spiritual infants of Israel.

Passing from this general use of history, its value is next to be considered in its application to particular passages. Down to the time of the Babylonian captivity and the conquest of Cyrus, the great nations whose history interlocks with that of Israel were Egypt on the one side, and, on the other, the nations ruling in Mesopotamia and Chaldea, whether Assyrian or Babylonian, while of lesser nations, the most important are the original tribes of Canaan and those immediately adjoining the land of Israel, the Phœnicians, the Syrians, the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the Philistines, and the various tribes of the desert. Of the history of the first two, large and authentic memorials have recently been brought to light in the discovery and reading of their own monumental remains, and this means of information is being constantly augmented by archæological and philological researches. Of the smaller nations less is known except from the Bible itself, from Josephus, and from occasional notices of them in the records of those greater nations. Occasionally, however, historic notices even of these are brought to light, as in the discovery of the famous “Moabite stone” in 1869. The bearing of the history of these various nations on

the interpretation of passages of Scripture in which they are more or less directly concerned is obvious. As illustrations, some less prominent points may be selected because they will better show how far these histories penetrate into the web of the Scripture story. It is related of Solomon in the early part of his reign (1 Kings iii. 1), that he "made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter." Now, as this marriage was evidently contracted with political ends in view, and as there is no account of any revolution in either Egypt or Israel, it is somewhat surprising to find that in the latter part of Solomon's reign Pharaoh not only gave asylum to his enemies, as Jeroboam (1 Kings xi. 40) and Hadad (*ib.* 18), but even contracted a close affinity with the latter and showed him especial favor and affection (*ib.* 19-22). The wonder is in nowise removed by learning (*ib.* 40) that this Pharaoh's name was Shishak, and, from 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26, 2 Chr. xii. 2-9, that he subsequently made an expedition at the head of a powerful army against Rehoboam, Solomon's son, whom he despoiled of a great part of his treasures. The difficulty is at once solved when it is observed that on Egyptian monuments this Shishak is the Sheshonk, the first king of the xxist dynasty. There had been, then, in Egypt

a change of dynasty, the new dynasty no longer having its royal city at Tanis, but at Tell-Basta, and altogether of such different antecedents and affinities<sup>1</sup> that it was not likely to feel any respect for the policy of those whom it had supplanted. This fact is also of value for other points of interpretation. Sheshonk ascended the throne 980 b. c., and a chronological datum of importance is thus obtained. Still further, in the list of towns given in the inscription in which he records his conquest of Judah, while several are the same with cities fortified by Rehoboam in the early part of his reign (2 Chr. xi. 7-9), and others are known towns of Judah and Benjamin, there are also several, which, according to the partition of the kingdom, should have fallen to Jeroboam. “An examination, however, of these names shows that the cities thus situated belong to two classes, — *they are either Canaanite or Levitical.* Hence we gather that during the four years which immediately followed the separation of the kingdoms, Rehoboam retained a powerful hold on the dominions of his rival, many Canaanite and Levitical towns acknowledging his sovereignty, and maintaining themselves against Jeroboam, who probably called in Shishak mainly to assist him in compelling these cities to submission.

<sup>1</sup> Mariette Bey, *Aperçu de l'Histoire d'Egypte*, p. 74.

The campaign was completely successful. The Levitical cities of Taanach, Rehob, Beth-horon, Kedemoth, Ibleam, and Alemeth, to the west of Jordan, of Mahanaim and Golan, to the east of that river, and the great Canaanite towns of Megiddo and Beth-shan were taken, probably by the combined forces of Jeroboam and Shishak, and were added to the dominions of the former. Shishak withdrew, having established his ally in the full possession of the whole territory which he claimed, and having greatly weakened and humbled his rival. It was, perhaps, this cause, rather than the Divine prohibition (1 Kings xii. 24), which prevented Rehoboam from attempting the invasion of the kingdom of Israel during the rest of his reign.”<sup>1</sup>

Another illustration from the Old Testament may be treated more briefly. In 2 Kings xx. 12, 13, Isa. xxxix. 1, 2, there is an account of an embassy to King Hezekiah from Babylon after his recovery from his mortal sickness. We are told that he “showed them all the house of his precious things . . . there was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah showed them not.” Was this an act of mere vanity on the part of the pious monarch? It is hard to believe it, and yet no reason is given for it in the sacred narrative. Can any light

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Geo. Rawlinson, in *Speaker's Com.*, 1 Kings xiv. 25.

be thrown upon his conduct from historical considerations? At this time, Babylon was an uneasy tributary to Nineveh, with difficulty held in subjection by the great Assyrian monarchy, and was doubtless even now looking for alliances (which it afterwards found in the Medes) to enable it to throw off the hated yoke. Judah was much in the same condition; during part of his reign, Hezekiah was actually a tributary to Sennacherib, and, when he revolted, suffered terribly at the hands of his powerful enemy and only escaped by providential interposition. Under these circumstances it can scarcely be doubted that the embassy from Babylon had a political significance, and that Hezekiah sought to present his resources in such a light as to show that his alliance was worth having. Hence we can understand the severity and the peculiar appropriateness of the consequent doom. Instead of trusting entirely in the Lord, he was looking for earthly succor. The very aid he sought should be the instrument of his kingdom's destruction, and the very treasures by which he sought to attract it should be carried as a spoil to Babylon.

In the interpretation of prophecy history is of essential service. Prophecy is usually an outline sketch, the details of which it is impossible to fill out before the fulfillment. It has in it

nothing of vagueness and uncertainty, like the heathen oracles which could be made to fit any event ; for the lines which are given are sharp and bold and strong. But we have no power to judge of their connections and the manner and method of their fulfillment, nor, generally, of the time. It is as if one traced on paper the simple outline against the sky of what he may see from his window, — houses, trees, and distant hills ; take the sketch away from the place where it was made, and no man could make out the details with certainty, but taking the sketch in his hand, he may go round the world and it will fit nowhere until he come to the exact place from which it was made, and then all becomes intelligible. So with the sketches of prophecy ; we can seldom understand more than their most prominent lines until we are borne on the course of time to that period of the world concerning which the sketch was given, and then all is clear. By far the larger part of the prophecies of the word of God have been long since fulfilled, and hence the value of history in enabling us to understand them. Our Lord warned His disciples to flee in all haste when they should “ see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place ” (Matt. xxiv. 15). It is hardly to be supposed that any of those who heard His words understood pre-

cisely what they meant ; but within forty years the Roman armies with their idolatries closed in upon Jerusalem, and then they saw the prediction fulfilled, and all who trusted in His word fled from the devoted city to Pella, and thus escaped the horrors and destruction of the final siege of Jerusalem.

Sometimes the sacred volume itself furnishes the history required for the interpretation of prophecy : as *e. g.*, the story of the Gospel alone can explain the predictions of a glorious and yet suffering Messiah ; sometimes secular history alone must be resorted to, as is the case with much of the prophecies of the world empires in the book of Daniel and notably with those in chap. xi. ; sometimes the two must be combined, and sometimes no fulfillment is anywhere distinctly recorded, but it may be inferred from facts and circumstances incidentally mentioned. A curious instance of the last is to be found in the dying prophecy of Jacob concerning his sons (Gen. xlix. 5-7) : —

“ Simeon and Levi are brethren ;  
I will divide them in Jacob,  
And scatter them in Israel.”

There is no difficulty in regard to Levi ; the curse was indeed, afterwards, transformed into a blessing when he was made the especial tribe of

the sanctuary in consequence of the zeal shown by him on God's behalf; still the prophecy was literally accomplished. Levi had no inheritance among the tribes, but was scattered through the land in the appointed Levitical cities. No such fate was in store for Simeon; the lot for this tribe was assigned on the southern border of Judah and he entered on its possession. There is no record of his having left it, and none of his being "scattered in Israel." Was, then, the prophecy fulfilled, and if so, how? The territory assigned to him was one which gradually assumed more and more of a desert character and became less and less agreeable as a residence, at the same time that it was peculiarly exposed to the forays of the Philistines and the incursions of the nomadic tribes of the desert. There were therefore strong reasons for their leaving their ancestral home. Even as early as the time of the outlawry of David, when much of the Scripture story is concerned with the country at and beyond the south of Judah, there is no mention of Simeon. When the kingdom was divided, Simeon cast in his lot with the northern division as one of the ten tribes. It is impossible that this could have been done if Simeon had remained in his original allotment, with the tribe of Judah intervening, in generally hostile attitude, between him and the

body of the nation to which he adhered. It is therefore evident that this tribe had already migrated northward, and as there was no room for them as a whole, they must have been scattered among the other tribes.

In the New Testament, history was formerly appealed to chiefly in the settlement of chronological questions ; but the importance of its bearing upon interpretation in other relations is now more and more appreciated. The personal characters and the careers of such persons as Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa, Pilate, Felix, Gallio, and many others need to be seen historically in order to understand at once their conduct and the demeanor of others towards them. The history of opinion is necessary to explain the parties and sects encountered in the Gospel narrative, and show why the statement of Christian truth should have been thrown into exactly the mould seen in each of the several epistles. For the use of the word *Ioudaioi* in the Gospel of John, history supplies a reason in the fact that when this Gospel was written the Christian church had become completely severed from its Jewish cradle, and “the Jews,” as such, were recognized as an antagonistic body, which was not the case before the destruction of Jerusalem, when the other Gospels were written.

In John ii. 20 the Jews are represented as

saying "forty and six years was this temple in building." The statement is one made by the Jews themselves, and curiosity is therefore naturally aroused in regard to its meaning. The temple of Solomon was seven years only in course of construction (1 Kings vi. 38), that of the return from the captivity, availing itself of the vast substructions of Solomon's temple still remaining, was only four years, reckoning from the time when its building was begun anew after the interruption caused by Tatnai (Ezra iv. 24; vi. 15). There is no record in Scripture of the building of any other temple; but Josephus details at length its rebuilding, piecemeal, by Herod the Great, and tells us that the work was begun in the eighteenth year of his reign<sup>1</sup> and only completed in the reign of Herod Agrippa II., A. D. 64.<sup>2</sup> The whole period of the work was therefore above eighty years; but, one part of it being rebuilt at a time, the Jews speak of what had then been accomplished. Thus we learn that from the eighteenth year of Herod's reign (734-35 A. U. C.) to the time of our Lord's first passover was forty-six years.

The bearing of history upon the chronology of the sacred records is important, but not unattended with serious difficulties. The sacred

<sup>1</sup> *Ant.*, xv., 11, § 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ant.*, xx., 9, § 7.

writers had no era from which to compute the years, like the Greek Olympiads or the Roman “A. U. C.”; but reckoned altogether by the years of the reigning monarch. Hence, before the foundation of the monarchy we have almost no reliable data, and after the division of the kingdom these is, within certain limits, great confusion from reckoning the accession of each monarch by the year of the reign of the rival monarch without any indication of the part of the year in which the accession took place. It has been the custom to attempt to fix the chronology of early times by the genealogies of the book of Genesis; but, independently of the fact that these are given with considerable variations in the Hebrew, the Samaritan, and the Greek, it appears from a careful examination of them that they can in no case form a reliable basis for chronology.<sup>1</sup> We are forced to rely, therefore, almost entirely upon the records of history for the chronology of the earliest ages, and also for its detail in many particulars of a later time.

In the New Testament, points of chronology are determined entirely, especially in Luke and the Acts, by reference to the persons and events

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. xxx. (April, 1873) p. 323, on “The Chronological Value of the Genealogy in Genesis v.”

of contemporaneous history. A single illustration may suffice to show at once the importance and the difficulty of this bearing of history upon the sacred chronology. The time of the birth of our Lord is fixed by Luke (ii. 2) as occurring at the period of the enrollment of the Jews under the governorship of Cyrenius (Quirinius). But we know from Josephus<sup>1</sup> that P. S. Quirinius became governor of Syria in A. D. 6, and there is thus an apparent anachronism in the record of Luke, which has for many years occasioned extreme difficulty to interpreters. By the learned and laborious historical researches of A. W. Zumpt, however, it is made highly probable that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria, and that his former governorship was about from B. C. 4-1. The difficulty thus apparently removed, reappears again in a slight degree on finding that the preceding governor, Quintilius Varus, was still employed in subduing a revolt of the Jews after the death of Herod, which occurred after our Lord's birth.<sup>2</sup> As yet, no historical explanation of this has been found; but, the whole period of difficulty having now been reduced to a few months, it may well be supposed that the enrollment was begun by Varus, but, being left incomplete by

<sup>1</sup> *Ant.*, xvii., 13, § 5; xviii., 1, § 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Tac.*, *Hist.*, v., 9; *Jos.*, *Ant.*, xvii., 10.

him on account of the terrible disorders which filled the close of his governorship, it was finished by Quirinius, and therefore attributed to him. It is noticeable that Luke calls this enrollment *πρώτη*, to distinguish it from another enrollment in Quirinius' second governorship in A. D. 6, to which allusion is made in his record of Gamaliel's speech in Acts v. 37.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE USE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTIQUITIES.

So much has been said elsewhere incidentally upon this subject that it may here be treated briefly. Yet it is evident that as the study of archæology must be one of the bases of any history worthy of the name, so it must be one of the essentials to the full understanding of all those parts of the Bible which have a historical side. To understand the character and needs of the Israelites at the time of the Mosaic legislation, and therefore to appreciate so much of the reason for this legislation as is involved in that character and those needs, we must know the influences, the manners and customs, the polity and the religion, under which they and their fathers had hitherto lived ; in other words, we must study the archæology of Egypt. In the same way the archæology of the Chaldeans is necessary to a full understanding of the prophecies of Ezekiel, delivered to the captives settled by the river Chebar.

To come to a later time : in order to bring before the mind's eye a vivid picture of our

Lord in His ministry on earth, and thus to enter into the full force of His teachings, it is necessary to know the character of the houses in which the people lived, their modes of travel, the roads by which they passed, the nature of their occupations, their customs of trade and of agriculture, their relations to the Greeks, the Romans, and others who lived among them, in a word, all that is embraced in the archaeology of the Palestine of that period. Later still, the travels, the voyages, the manifold experiences of Paul, depend largely for their interpretation upon the archaeology of the countries through which he passed. As an illustration of this, in what may be called an almost unnoticed corner of Scripture, take the note in what may be called Luke's journal in Acts xxviii. 13 : " We came the next day to Puteoli, where we found brethren." The ruins of Puteoli, now Pozzuoli, are still visible a few miles west of Naples. There is but one place where the ship in which Paul sailed could have landed him and his fellow-prisoners. This is a very long and narrow quay, stretching far out from the shore and with the end now submerged. As the Apostle landed on this and was marched by the centurion to the shore, he had directly before him, at the head of the quay, the famous temple of Serapis. It was a temple which, in this Greek

colony, bore witness to the decaying religions of the classic nations, and showed the effort to bolster them up by the introduction of foreign superstitions ; for Serapis was an Egyptian deity. It also bore witness to the hollowness, priest-craft, and fraud of those religions ; for this temple was famous for its miraculous cures, the secret of which is exposed by the thermal and medicinal springs which flow through the adytum of the temple. It was in the midst of the worship and the ideas which this temple symbolized that Paul found "Christian brethren." His and their position, the conflict which awaited the truth Paul preached, the nature of his work, the difficulties and dangers he was called to undergo, are all illustrated by this little bit of archaeology. In passing, it may be noticed how this same temple illustrates also the parables of our Lord of the mustard seed (Matt. xiii. 31, 32) and of the leaven (*ib.* 33). This temple stood then, and for some ages after, in its full splendor, while Paul, because he was a Christian, was compelled to march as a prisoner before its gate. It still bears a marble inscription testifying to the liberality of Augustus in its repairs. Ages passed by. The then little seed of the church grew and strengthened until the heathen temples became neglected, and were suffered to fall into decay. The ground on which this temple stood

gradually sunk beneath the level of the sea, while the rubbish accumulated around its pillars of Egyptian marble until it had risen to twelve feet of their height and the sea rose upon them to nineteen feet, the exact measurements being marked by the borings of the marine *lithodomus* in the part below the water and unprotected by the rubbish. Centuries rolled away and the temple of Serapis was forgotten. At last, the rising ground lifted it again above the waves, and it could be safely examined and its history sought out by the Christian as a monument of a buried superstition, which had passed away with the once mighty empires of Egypt, of Greece, and of Rome.

In the narrative of our Lord's standing before Caiaphas and of His being thrice denied by His boldest Apostle there are certain difficulties which are removed by a knowledge of the structure of an oriental house. The trial being held in the night, it was without doubt in the high priest's own palace, and this was built, after the eastern fashion, around the four sides of an open court with a passage way of some length leading from the street to the court. By reason of the cold, a fire had been built in this open court where Peter stood and warmed himself (John xviii. 18), while his Master, bound, stood at the entrance of a room in which

Caiaphas was seated and which opened upon the court. As the trial went on and the accusations grew more fierce, Peter shrunk back into the passage way (*αὐλὴ*), but with the light from the fire still shining upon him (Luke xxii. 56), when the woman who kept the door (John xviii. 17) recognized him as the one whom she had admitted with John, and accused him as a disciple. Then came his first denial. As time went on he again drew near the fire and mingled with the crowd standing round it; but one and another began to whisper about him, another maid (Matt. xxvi. 71) saying to those around her (*τοῖς ἐκεῖ*) that he was with Jesus, and then the same maid (Mark xiv. 69) taking up the word and giving assurance of its truth to those that stood by (*τοῖς παρεστῶσιν*), Peter, meanwhile, withdrawing from their gaze and whisperings to the passage way (*προαύλιον*, Mark xiv. 68) near the gate (*εἰς τὸν πυλῶνα*, Matt. xxvi. 71), when after a little, a man (*μετὰ βραχὺ ἔτερος*, Luke xxii. 58) seeing him directly accused him and he again denied, John summing up the whole of the confused scene by using the plural “*they said to him*” (*εἰπον οὖν αὐτῷ*, xviii. 25), in which we must not lose sight of the *οὖν*, *therefore*, which refers to the whisperings and accusations which had been going on around the fire. Finally, after a little time (*μετὰ μικρόν*, Matt. xxvi.

73, Mark xiv. 70), definitely fixed by Luke as “about an hour” (verse 59), the accusations were renewed, according to the first two Evangelists, by several persons, while according to Luke (verse 59) their spokesman was another man (*ἄλλος τις*), who is identified by John as a servant of the high priest and a kinsman of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, the multitudinous accusations being that he was a Galilean (Matt., Mark, Luke), and more particularly, that he had been seen in the garden (John). Again came a denial with oaths, and then the Master, who was standing in a position from which Peter could be seen, turned and looked upon him, and brought him to his bitter repentance. The simple knowledge of the probable structure of the house, with attention to the exact language used by each of the Evangelists, thus removes what has sometimes been considered as a marked discrepancy in the narrative.

A knowledge of the different methods of reckoning the hours of the day in use at the time the Gospels were written is valuable, both for removing an apparent discrepancy between the Gospels, and also for the better understanding of several passages in John. That the common Jewish method of numbering the hours from sunrise was followed by the Synoptists, admits of no question; but there was another system,

the official system of the Romans, with which John must have been acquainted. The existence of this system has been doubted, but the following citations must remove all doubt on that point: Pliny writes, “*Ipsum diem alii aliter observavere . . . vulgus omne a luce ad tenebras: sacerdotes Romani, et qui diem definiere civilem, item Ægyptii et Hipparchus, a media nocte in medium.*”<sup>1</sup> Also Aulus Gellius, “*Populum autem Romanum ita, uti Varro dixit, dies singulos adnumerare a media nocte usque ad medium proximam multis argumentis ostenditur,*” and he goes on to give these proofs.<sup>2</sup> Assuming that John used this reckoning, not only is the difficulty between John xix. 14 and Mark xv. 25 entirely removed, but an important help is gained in the interpretation of all the other passages in John in which mention is made of the hour. The congruity of this system with his narrative throughout is a weighty reason for thinking that he adopted it. Thus in i. 37–40 mention is made of the two disciples of John the Baptist who sought an interview with Jesus “and remained with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.” According to the Jewish system, this would have been about four in the afternoon, allowing but short time for that

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, ii, 79.

<sup>2</sup> Aul. Gellius, *Noct. Att.*, lib. iii., 2.

interview which had so great an effect on their opinions and changed their whole subsequent life; but by the other reckoning it was about ten in the morning, which allows a more probable length of time for the interview. In John iv. 4-30 occurs the account of the discourse with the woman of Samaria; ver. 6 states that "it was about the sixth hour" when Jesus, wearied with the way, sat on the well and the woman came to draw water. It would be contrary to all oriental usage that she should have gone out of the city to draw water in the heat of noon, but if John is understood to use that reckoning of the hours which made this six in the evening, her action becomes perfectly natural, and our Lord's hunger and weariness is also explained. Once more, in John iv. 52, the nobleman of Capernaum learns from his servants (who had come to meet him) that his son had been healed at the seventh hour of the previous day,—the same hour at which Jesus had spoken to him. If, according to Jewish usage, 1 P. M. had been meant by the "seventh hour" it is incredible that the nobleman and his servants should not have met until the following day. The site, indeed, of both Cana and Capernaum is in doubt, yet fixed within such limits that the journey from the one to the other could easily have been performed after one o'clock. The servants

would have had time to bring the joyful news quite to Cana, and the nobleman would have had time to reach his son at Capernaum ; going towards each other they would of course have met much sooner. But if the “seventh hour” was our seven in the evening, the journey of either party must have been deferred until the next morning. Hence when they met, they said “*yesterday*, at the seventh hour the fever left him.” It may then very certainly be concluded that John uses throughout this method of naming the hours ; as, though the cases cited are the only instances, there are no instances whatever of the commoner method of the Synoptists.

Another case of supposed opposition in the parallel passages of the Gospels may be explained in the same way by reference to the customs of the times. On our Lord’s last journey to Jerusalem He passed through Jericho with the crowd of pilgrims going up to the Feast. On this occasion He healed two blind men according to Matthew, of whom only one, Bartimeus, the more prominent, is mentioned by the other Evangelists. But the first two Evangelists say expressly that this was when He was departed from Jericho (*ἐκπορευομένων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ Ἰερειχώ*, Matt. xx, 29 ; and, in the singular, Mark x. 46), while Luke says that it was while he was drawing near to Jericho (*ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν*

*αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱερείχῳ*, Luke xix, 35). From the leisurely character of this whole journey and the constant embracing of every opportunity to teach, it is altogether likely that our Lord spent some days in the neighborhood of Jericho. It is the well-known custom of travelers in the East on visiting a city to lodge without its walls, as may be illustrated by our Lord's own lodging at Bethany during the following week spent at Jerusalem, and as is still the custom with travelers in Palestine at the present day; in fact, at the time of the Passover, it would have been impossible for the crowd of pilgrims passing through to have found lodgings within the city. Now if these two very probable suppositions, the latter of which results from a known archæological fact, be put together, the difficulty is easily solved. The miracle occurred when our Lord had gone out of Jericho for the night, and more exactly, when He was drawing near to it again in the morning.

In the use of archæology in these and a multitude of similar instances of interpretation, it is plain that the archæological facts cannot be hunted up by the interpreter in connection with the particular passage he is explaining. He would have no clue to what he should seek, or to where it could be found. His mind must be already familiar with the facts, and then

when the occasion arises to which they are applicable, they will present themselves to his consideration.

Archaeology often gives a fresh view of the meaning of the text when there are no difficulties to be removed. In 2 Tim. iv. 13 Paul directs Timothy when he should come to him to bring certain things left at Troas, and among them "the books, but especially the parchments." What were these parchments? Archaeology shows but two kinds of material used for manuscripts, papyrus and parchment. The former was by far the cheaper and more common; it is probable that this very epistle was written upon it. But it was also fragile and easily destroyed by much use, so that all the more valuable works were written on parchment when it could be obtained. Paul was not in circumstances to spend much upon literary treasures, and yet he had some parchments. These, then, must have contained the books most highly prized by him, and the inference seems a safe one that in all probability they were copies of parts of the Old Testament. In Gen. xli. 42 it is said, "Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand." One wonders how the ring that fitted the finger of Pharaoh also happened to fit that of Joseph. In the British Museum many signet rings of ancient Egypt are preserved, and

a considerable number of them are not joined together solidly, as in a modern ring, but are connected by a spiral spring of gold wire, allowing them to fit any finger.

In the book of Ecclesiastes the evils of the existing government are represented so strongly that this fact has been urged as a powerful argument against the Solomonic authorship of the book. Archæology makes it evident that these evils were everywhere inseparable from the oriental system of government. No other system was known to the period; had Solomon, in his wisdom, been able to devise a better, it is hardly possible that he could have planted it among his people in the space of a single generation, and it is more than doubtful whether his luxurious character would have allowed him to attempt it. The evils described did then certainly exist under Solomon's government, and to his mind, being inseparable from all government, were no reproach to him. There was therefore no reason why he should not speak of them in this philosophical treatise, nor for rejecting the traditional authorship of the book.

On the other hand, supposed mistakes in archæology have sometimes been detected, and could they have been substantiated, would certainly have seriously militated against the received authorship of the books in which they occur.

Thus in Gen. xl. 9-11 the vine is mentioned as cultivated in Egypt for wine. But Herodotus (ii. 77) says that the vine was unknown in ancient Egypt and that the Egyptian wines were made of barley. The monuments of Egypt, however, show that the vine was cultivated, and the art of making wine from it practiced, from the earliest periods.

So also the authorship of Genesis has been called in question from the assumption of ignorance of an archæological fact which must have been known to the Israelites. In Gen. 1. 2, 3 it is said, "and the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him ; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed." The Israelites could not have been ignorant of the Egyptian custom of embalming ; but as they did not practice it among themselves, at the end of forty years after the Exodus, when Moses must have revised his writings, and when all who had lived to maturity in Egypt were dead, they may well have forgotten about the time required, and so have needed this explanation. There is therefore nothing in this to throw any doubt on the Mosaic authorship of the book.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE USE OF NATURAL SCIENCE.

THERE is, perhaps, no other knowledge, outside of that immediately connected with his work, of more importance to the interpreter, and yet requiring to be applied with so much discretion as the knowledge of natural science. The interpreter will be extremely apt to involve himself in difficulties and error, if he attempt to bring forward imperfectly understood facts or theories of science in the explanation of particular passages of Scripture; for a more perfect knowledge may show that the bearing of the fact or theory of science has been misunderstood, and thus not only is he left in a somewhat ridiculous position, but also the impression is produced that the facts which have failed to help in the explanation are really in some sort of antagonism to the statements of the text. A noteworthy instance of this occurred when, in the early progress of geology, fossils were discovered in the rocks upon mountain heights, and the fact was at once claimed as indisputable proof of the deluge. To be sure, the counter

claim of Voltaire and his school, that they were shells dropped by the returning pilgrims from the holy land, was still more ridiculous; but when, in the progress of science both suppositions were disproved, and it was found that these fossils attained their present position by the elevation of the land, and, having been deposited in extremely remote eras, could have nothing to do with the Noachian deluge, the discomfiture of Voltaire's followers was a matter of little consequence, while a serious impression was produced on many minds that the Bible required for its support unfounded hypotheses.

Nevertheless a knowledge of natural science is often of great service, both in enabling us to understand facts of nature which underlie much of the Scripture story, and in preventing false interpretations of particular passages, and sometimes even in giving us important help in their interpretation. Such facts as the periodical rising of the Nile illustrate all that part of the Bible which relates to Egypt; while the knowledge of the geological formation of the greater part of Palestine, as a dolomitic limestone, accounts at once for the extraordinary fruitfulness of the soil when properly irrigated, and also for the abundance and size of the caves of which such frequent mention is made in the sacred narrative. The fact that the course of the Jor-

dan lies in a deep depression produced by a geological convulsion in some unknown era, so that even the Sea of Galilee is a little below, and the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, continually illustrates the history of the life of Israel and explains apparent anomalies in the natural productions of the country, as, *e. g.*, the palm at Jericho. The rugged basaltic plateau in the “land of Bashan,” with the wide stretches of pasture lands around it, explains how Moses could have found so many cities grouped in so small a space, and could have conquered so many in so short a time.<sup>1</sup> These are, indeed, geographical facts, but facts to be best appreciated with some knowledge of geology.

In John v. 2-7 occurs the account of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. Throwing out the last clause of verse 3, and the whole of verse 4, as not a part of the genuine text, we have a story, which needs explanation, of a multitude of sick folk waiting for the time when the water should be moved. Archæological investigation, supplemented by some knowledge of hydraulics, shows that this pool was probably fed by an intermittent spring,<sup>2</sup> and to this the peo-

<sup>1</sup> See Porter's *Giant Cities of Bashan*.

<sup>2</sup> See Robinson's *Biblical Researches*, vol. i., pp. 499-508, especially 507, 508.

ple (whether rightly or wrongly the text does not say) attributed therapeutic virtue.

The breaking up of the golden calf in the wilderness by Moses (Ex. xxxii. 20), has already been spoken of as an instance in which chemistry, by showing that gold with a small percentage of certain alloys becomes crystalline and brittle, and that the Egyptians used such alloy in some of their ornaments, has been able to relieve the narrative of what once seemed an insuperable difficulty.

The three hours of noonday darkness, while our Lord hung upon the cross (Matt. xxvii. 45 ; Mark xv. 33 ; Luke xxiii. 44), some persons once sought to explain as the effect of an eclipse ; but, knowing that the event occurred at the full moon (being on the 15th Nisan), the slightest knowledge of astronomy shows that this was impossible.

Twice in the Bible miracles are recorded by which the apparent motion of the sun was delayed or reversed : the miracle of Joshua (Josh. x. 12-14), and the going back of the shadow ten degrees on the sun-dial of Ahaz, in the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 9-11 ; Isa. xxxviii. 8). It was once supposed that these miracles might have been wrought by the temporary stoppage of the revolution of the earth on its axis ; but independently of other and sufficient scientific

objections to this, it is now known, by calculations from the records of ancient eclipses, that no such disturbance of time can have occurred since a period long anterior to that in which these miracles were wrought. It is evident that both these miracles were phenomenal; and in regard to the latter, an explanation of the way in which it was wrought can be easily supplied by the supposition of a slight "*terræ motus*."

Natural science has enabled us to see in a striking light the vast superiority of the cosmogony in Gen. i. to that of any other which ever appeared among the nations, and even, from its general truthfulness in regard to things far beyond the human knowledge of the time, to infer with at least a high degree of probability that it must have been revealed.

While science requires a more careful examination of the evidence by which the Scriptural miracles are attested, it also gives to them, when sufficiently proved, an apologetic value of a much higher kind; for it shows conclusively that they could only have been wrought by the intervention of a higher than human intelligence and power, and were, therefore, not mere *τεράτα*, but *σημεῖα*, in the highest sense.

But, as was said at the outset, the great value of scientific knowledge is not in the interpretation of particular texts, but in the analogies it

offers to revealed truths, and especially in the better understanding to be obtained of the ways of God from the study of His works. Revelation and nature, it cannot be too often repeated, are from the same hand and are mutually illustrative of one another. Without the knowledge of nature the interpreter is constantly liable to fall into the same sort of errors of exegesis as those by which the theology of the church was for many ages disfigured, until corrected by advancing science.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> But here let me enter a caveat. The knowledge of science, if genuine and true, is chiefly important in its effect upon the interpreter's own mind. It will, indeed, largely modify his expression, but there is seldom occasion to speak of it directly. It is much worse than useless to affect a knowledge which one does not have, and nowhere is ignorance more conspicuous than in dealing with a subject to which so many advanced specialists are devoted. None are so ready to lug in science by the heels as those who know least about it; and their use of it is likely to be as offensive to the scientist as to the theologian.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE USE OF THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES, AND THE IMMEDIATE CONNECTION.

THE two subjects here placed together are sufficiently easily separated in theory, but practically they interlock so closely that it has seemed better to treat them together.

Under this head the interpreter comes to an essential part of his work, and one requiring the utmost thoroughness. Supposing him to have already become familiar with the required languages in the course of his preparation, he has now to apply his knowledge with accuracy and care to ascertain exactly what the writer meant to say by the words he has used and the form into which he has thrown them. Regard must first of all be had to the genius of the language, whether the Hebrew of the Old Testament or the Hellenistic Greek of the New. With this the interpreter must be supposed to be already familiar. It is a knowledge which he cannot acquire for the first time in the examination of any particular passage; but in which he must be so thoroughly grounded that it will, even

without any especial attention to it, always affect his whole work of translation. Doubtless he should continue to the last to grow in this matter; but he cannot be fitted to his task until he has made some good progress in it.

With this preparation, the general sense of any particular passage will become obvious to him on simply reading it over. Then, when he begins to study it more carefully, his first point is to ascertain the logical connection; for this will often seriously modify the sense of particular words and sometimes of larger constructions. Thus in Rom. ix. 13, or in the passage from which it is quoted, Mal. i. 2, 3, a knowledge of the Hebrew idiom shows that when God is represented as saying “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,” the word “hated” is not to be taken in that absolute sense which the *εμίσησα* or the *רָאַבְתִּי* taken alone, might bear; but is a relative term, a term of comparison, standing over against the *ηγάπησα* and to be understood in connection therewith.<sup>1</sup> Familiar instances of similar usage are in John xii. 25, where the *μισῶν* is in contrast with *φιλῶν*, and where not only no one would think of understanding the *μισῶν* of an absolute *hated* of one’s life, but where such hatred would be clearly opposed to

<sup>1</sup> For the opposite view see Meyer, and also Alford, in Rom. ix. 13.

God's will. Another instance is Luke xiv. 26, where the contrast is not expressed, but only implied in the love necessary *εἰναι μον μαθητής*; here the absolute hatred of all earthly relations, as well as of one's own life, would contradict all Christian teaching as well as the example of our Lord Himself. Again, in Luke x. 20, rejoicing in the subjection of the spirits is only relatively forbidden, and in verse 21 the thanks are given not that "these things are hidden" from any one, but only that they are revealed to babes *rather than* to the wise. This being understood in regard to the sense of the *ἐμίσησα* from a general knowledge of the language, the next point to be noted is the logical connection. In Rom. ix. it is evident that the subject treated is the (partial) rejection of the Israelites and the calling of the Gentiles; and in the passage in Mal. i. 2-4, the reference, in the same way, is to the nations descended from Jacob and Esau. However the progenitors may be considered as connected with their descendants, the subject, in either place, is the descendants, viewed as nations. The sense of the whole passage then is, that in the setting aside the mass of the Israelites and the calling of the Gentiles there is nothing new or strange, for all along God has set aside a large part of the seed of Abraham, as in the case of Esau, and fulfilled His promises only to a remnant.

The general context as bearing upon the grammatical interpretation having thus been considered, the interpreter's next care must be with the immediate context and with the grammatical structure of the passage before him. The meaning of a sentence may easily be misapprehended, sometimes even reversed, if this be not rightly understood.

A great deal of doctrinal statement has been made to rest on Rom. xiv. 23, “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin,” which is deprived of all support from this passage by simply observing the connection; for the *οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως* is evidently not used here in the special sense of faith in Christ, but in contrast to the *διακρινόμενος*. The meaning of the passage in its connection is, that he who does anything of the rightfulness of which he is in doubt is condemned, because he violates his conscience; for whatever is done without a clear conviction of its right is sinful.

The A. V. (and also the revisers) translate the last clause of 1 John v. 20, “This is the true God and eternal life,” where the antecedent of *this* is ambiguous, but with a presumption that it refers to the truth enunciated in the earlier part of the verse; but on turning to the grammatical structure of the original it is plain that the antecedent of *οὗτος* is personal; but whether it refers to *θεός*, the main subject of the

passage, or to *Ἰησοῦν Χριστῷ*, the immediate antecedent, is disputed among commentators, and must be determined by the logical connection.

In Mark xvi. 4 the particle *for* (*γάρ*) is often misunderstood. Attention to the connection shows that it refers to the question, “Who shall roll us away the stone?” and not to the immediately preceding clause, “they saw that the stone was rolled away.” Here the logical connection prevails over the grammatical.

Many passages are made clear by a knowledge of the fact that the third person plural of the verb (active or middle) is often used impersonally, in the same sense as the third person singular of the passive. An instance in which our translators have recognized this usage is Luke xii. 20, “this night thy soul shall be required of thee;” *lit.*, “they shall require;” another instance in which they have failed to recognize it, and the failure has led to much difficulty of interpretation, occurs in the same gospel, xvi. 9: “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, *they* may receive you into everlasting habitations.” This is often understood as if the nominative to *δέξωνται* were either *φίλοι* or *μαμωνᾶ* taken in a collective sense; really it is impersonal and the sense is, “so use the riches entrusted to you that they may become your

friends, and in view of your faithfulness *ye may be received*,” etc.

Heb. xii. 1 presents a case both of the importance of the grammatical connection, and of attention to the meaning of words. Chapter xi. has recounted a long list of the heroes of faith, and there, in xii. 1, these are spoken of as a vast cloud of *μαρτύρων* “compassing us about.” The word *μαρτύρ* is anglicized *martyr* in just its original sense, and hence the meaning is not, that we have many witnesses of our Christian course; but that we run in the midst of a vast army who by faith have already won the crown. The stimulus proposed is not their seeing us, but their faithful example under great trials, all culminating in the example of the *ἀρχηγός* and *τελειωτής* of the faith, Jesus. This sense is obscured in the A. V. both by the obsolete translation *witnesses*, and also by the unfortunate division of the chapters.

Only by careful attention to the connection can the distinction of meaning be observed in the parallel verses, John v. 25 and 29. In the former the reference is to the spiritually, in the latter to the literally, dead. The fact that the last shall certainly be raised to life is made a reason why we should not wonder that the first shall be spiritually quickened.

After our Lord’s discourse concerning the

bread of life, at Capernaum, many of his disciples murmured and said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (John vi. 60). The question has been hotly discussed whether this "hard saying" was Christ's requirement that they should eat His flesh and drink His blood (vs. 53-56) literally understood, or whether it was trusting in Him as the essential and sufficient condition of salvation, which is certainly the leading thought of the discourse, and was the thing which offended them so much in verses 41, 42. To determine this, a consideration of the context is essential. In verses 61, 62 our Lord asks, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" There is nothing apparent in this to remove the difficulty about eating flesh and drinking blood; because there is no congruity between the two things, and nothing in the one to show the possibility of the other. But His ascension would be an unanswerable argument to the objection that He was making too much of Himself as the central point of man's salvation. We must conclude, therefore, from the answer, that this was the gist of the objection.

Sometimes a want of familiarity with the grammatical constructions of the New Testament on the part of the scribes who copied its

MSS., in later ages, has led to unfounded and even unfortunate changes of the text which have passed into the *Textus Receptus*, and thus into the A. V. One of these, of great importance from a chronological point of view, is in Acts xiii. 20 where the words *καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα* have been transferred from their proper place after *ώς ἔτεσι τετρακοσίοις καὶ πεντήκοντα* to a position before them where they do not belong. The effect of this is to give an erroneous statement of the length of the period of the Judges, instead of a correct one of the time from the promise to Abraham to the division of the land among his descendants.

Another instance is in the uncalled for insertion of the word *ἀναξίως* in 1 Cor. xi. 29. The scribes did not understand that *μὴ* in the sentence *ὅ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἔαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει, μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα*, means *if not*; but taking it in the sense of the simple negative *οὐ*, felt compelled to insert the explanatory *ἀναξίως*.

One of the words the construction of which in the New Testament requires to be carefully noted, because it varies from that of classic Greek, is the particle *ἴνα*. A discussion of this word here would occupy quite too large a space, and reference only can be made to the grammars of the New Testament, especially to the admirable treatment of the subject in Butt-

mann.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that it has become greatly modified from its original strong illative force, and that this fact materially affects the interpretation of many passages.

In the Old Testament, attention to the grammatical connection is even more imperatively necessary than in the New, because the language is far less rich in inflections, and the construction is often only made out by means of the connection. Thus the tenses of the verbs, other than that of the leading verb of the paragraph, are usually dependent upon their connection, and the sense would often be changed to nonsense were this neglected. In the very first chapter of the Bible the subsequent verbs connected by the γ are determined in their temporal signification by the נָאָתָה of verse 1 and by the other perfects in the chapter. Moreover, the narrative of that chapter continues through three verses of the next; while at Gen. ii. 4 a fresh narrative begins, undoubtedly originally a different document, giving an account of the creation from a different point of view.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Grammar of the N. T. Greek*, by A. Buttmann, authorized translation, by J. Henry Thayer.

<sup>2</sup> [This may be the best place to note that the connection is often obscured by the unfortunate division of the chapters. Thus Gen. xxvii. 46 mentions the stratagem of Rebecca to remove her favorite Jacob out of the way of Esau's revenge; while the following verses, assigned to chapter xxviii., give the

It must be remembered that the sensitiveness of the Hebrew and of the Aryan languages to the grammatical proprieties is shown in different ways. Thus in Hebrew the agreements of gender and number are not seldom violated, feminine nouns being nominative to masculine verbs, and *vice versa*, and the singular and plural being construed together without any obvious reason. Sometimes it is possible in these cases to suppose a corruption of the text, as in 1 Chron. ii. 46, 48, where the verb **נָלַךְ**, *to bear*, is construed with the names of two of Caleb's concubines first in the feminine, then in the masculine, and then

story of Isaac's sending him away in consequence. Ex. vi. 1 is the Divine answer to Moses' complaint in v. 22, 23, and must be taken in connection with it. Ex. vii. 1, 2, in the same way, is God's answer to the objection of Moses that he was "of uncircumcised lips." The appointment of the Levites, Num. xviii. 1-7, by the same faulty division of the chapters, is separated from its immediate occasion, in the murmuring of the people because holier duties were required of them than they were competent to fulfill (xvii. 12, 13). In Deut. xxix. the first verse refers back and forms the conclusion of the address which ends here; this verse, therefore, belongs with chap. xxviii., and does not form the heading to the fresh discourse which begins with xxix. 2. These instances have all been selected from the Pentateuch; similar ones may easily be found in almost any of the other books. As a single example may be mentioned the introduction of a fourth chapter in the book of Malachi; this division, which has been introduced from the LXX. and the Vulgate, but does not exist in the Hebrew, sadly mars the unity of this great final prophecy of the old dispensation.]

again in the feminine. But often such a superposition is inadmissible, as Isa. xxxii. 11, **הַרְדִּי נָשָׁאָנְגָּפָרָת**, “tremble ye careless women”; cf. Gen. xiii. 6, Psalms cxix. 155, Judg. xiii. 12, etc. Sometimes both number and gender are wrong at once, as 1 Kings xi. 3, **וַיַּחַי לְזָבֶד נָשִׁים**, “and there were to him wives”; cf. Psalms lvii. 2, Mic. ii. 6, etc.

Yet it is not to be supposed from this circumstance that Hebrew grammar was in general a loose and uncertain thing; on the contrary, it had its fixed laws, and these, when applicable, must determine interpretation absolutely, as may be seen on looking into any good modern commentary. Thus, in Isa. viii. 21, the Hebrew will not allow the translation of the A. V., “curse their king and their God;” for regard must be had to the prepositions **בְּמִלְכֵו וּבְאֱלֹהֵיו**, which require the translation “BY its king and its God.”<sup>1</sup> In 1 Kings vi. 15–18 there are two instances of the same misunderstanding of the grammatical construction by the translators of the A. V., which materially affect the idea of the structure of the temple. In verse 15 it is said, that Solomon “built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling;” but, on the other hand, it is said, in the latter part of the same verse, that he “covered the floor of the house

[<sup>1</sup> See Rev. Ver., Isa. viii. 21.]

with planks of fir." Here appears a plain contradiction within the limits of a single verse. Again, in verse 16 it is said, that "he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor and the walls with boards of cedar." This is sufficiently unintelligible in itself; but in verse 18 we are told, "there was no stone seen," and in verse 2, that the height of the house was "thirty cubits;" the question at once occurs, how could a cedar ceiling of twenty cubits cover up a wall of thirty cubits so that no stone should be seen? The difficulty is at once removed by an examination of the Hebrew, which at the same time brings out an often unobserved feature in the structure of the temple. The expression, "both the floor . . . and the walls" in each case is in Hebrew עֲדַקְרַבָּת מִקְרָבָע (except that in the second case the article is placed before each of the nouns, and that in verse 16 the words "of the ceiling" are to be supplied from verse 15). Now there is but one possible way of translating this grammatically: he built *from* the floor of the house *unto* the walls of the ceiling, *i. e.*, he covered the whole side walls from floor to ceiling with cedar so that the stone was entirely concealed. As the height of this was twenty cubits, while the exterior height was thirty cubits, it follows that there was a difference of ten cubits between the exterior and the

interior height. This may have been taken up either, as Fergusson thinks, by the slope of the roof ;<sup>1</sup> or, if the roof was flat after the analogy of all oriental architecture, there was a room above. But instances of the need of attention to the grammatical structure need not be multiplied either for the Hebrew or the Greek ; it is an obvious requirement in the translation of any language.

The older interpreters were more often in fault in not observing the exact grammatical form of particular words, and it is in this point that modern exegesis, though sometimes pushed too far, has made some of its chief advances. Here again the Hebrew forms often require to be helped out by the context, on account of the poverty of that language in inflections. Thus the so-called perfect tense has to do duty both as a Greek aorist in simple narration, in such passages as Gen. iii. 16, **רָאָה** = *he said*, and as a Greek perfect, denoting an action with consequences continuing to the time of the speaker or writer, as in Gen. xxxii. 11, **הִיְרָה** = *I have become* two bands. So also the other, or imperfect, tense, is used to express a variety not only of temporal but also of modal significations. The use and the meaning of these tenses, in their various connections, is a serious study,

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, article Temple.

and although grammarians have undoubtedly insisted far too much, both here and in Greek, upon a nicety which is not to be found in other writers and in other languages, yet the interpreter cannot afford to neglect their normal value, which he will find to be also their actual value wherever emphasis is placed upon them. Thus, in such a passage as Acts xix. 6, one cannot fail to see that the imperfects *ἐλάλουν* and *ἐπροφήτευον* forbid the idea that the gifts of tongues and prophecy were only momentary, and they show that the newly baptized were accustomed to exercise them.<sup>1</sup> So, too, while the aorist may be interchanged with the imperfect or the perfect in various places in which no especial stress is to be laid on the one or the other (as *ηὐδόκησα* in Matt. iii. 17; *ἐκάθισαν*, xxiii. 2; *οὐκ ἀφῆκε*, John viii. 29; *οὐδεὶς . . . ἐμίσησεν*, Eph. v. 29, etc.), and where only an excessive grammatical subtlety can give the tense its appropriate meaning; yet, usually, it has the distinct force of accomplishment which is not to be neglected in interpretation. Thus in Luke xvii. 8 the *ἔως φάγω καὶ πίω* is quite correctly rendered in the A. V., “Till I have eaten and drunken;” and the distinction between the aorist and imperfect is finely marked in Luke viii. 23, *πλεόντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἀφύπνωσε· καὶ κατέβη λαῖλαψ εἰς τὴν*

[<sup>1</sup> Possibly the imperfect has here its inceptive force.]

λίμνην, καὶ συνεπληροῦντο καὶ ἐκινδύνευον, where the A. V. fails to preserve the distinction. On the other hand, the essential idea of the present (except as modified in the indicative by the idea of actual present time) and of the imperfect is “action as a matter of process,” and this idea should often control the interpretation. Thus in Matt. xxv. 8, *σβέννυνται* does not indicate that the lamps “are gone out” (A. V.), but that they burn dimly and are *just going out*. James iii. 18, the *σπείρεται* shows that the future harvest of righteousness is now having its seed sown in peace by those that make peace. It is particularly important to bear in mind this sense of a continuing process in passages where, by neglecting it, a doctrinal significance has been imagined which does not really exist; as in Acts ii. 47, where the *σωζομένους* marks, not those who have already been, but those who are in process of being, saved. So also in 1 John v. 18, *πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει*. Sometimes this process is shown by the circumstances to be incomplete, and then becomes simply “procedure towards an action,” as in Luke i. 59, *ἐκάλουν αὐτὸν . . . Ζαχαρίαν*; Matt. iii. 14, *ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης διεκάλυεν αὐτόν*; Heb. xi. 17, *καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν*. Yet it would be quite idle to say that this idea of process is to be seen in every instance of *λέγων* or *ἔλεγε* that occurs.

So also the aorist is often finely distinguished from the perfect, and the interpreter must have regard to the distinction, as in Col. i. 16, *ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα . . . τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτισται*; 1 John i. 2, *ἥ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν*. Yet, on the other hand, perfects are used for aorists, and aorists for perfects. In addition to instances of the latter already given may be mentioned Heb. viii. 1, *ἐχομεν ἀρχιερέα ὃς ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ, κ. τ. λ.*, and Mark iii. 21, *ἐξέστη*. Of its use for the pluperfect, even in a leading clause, Matt. xiv. 3 and Mark vi. 17 may suffice; for, however this may be explained by supposing the writer to have transferred himself in thought as a narrator to a past time, yet, as we read the narrative, the sense expressed by the aorist is pluperfect.

The attempt has been sometimes made to find evidence for important doctrinal statements on the use of the aorist, which it is impossible to sustain in view of the laxity of the New Testament usage. Thus the prayer of Paul for Onesiphorus, in 2 Tim. i. 18, has been brought forward as a justification of prayers for the dead on the supposition that Onesiphorus could not have been living at the time, and that supposition is based upon the use of the aorists in verses 16, 17. It is certainly clear from this passage, and from 2 Tim. iv. 19, that he was not at the time with “his

household." He may have been absent somewhere else, or he may have been, as Chrysostom and Theodoret suppose, with Paul at Rome. Altogether forgetting the former possibility, it has been urged against the latter<sup>1</sup> that it is inconsistent with the aorists *ἀνέψυξεν*, *ἐπαισχύνθη*, and *ἐξήτησεν*, especially in connection with the *γενόμενος ἐν Ρώμῃ* of verse 17. But, independently of the fact that the Greek writers, Chrysostom and Theodoret, did not feel this difficulty, it is completely met by the fact that, in the case of Stephanas and his household, Paul speaks in the same way in 1 Cor. xvi. 15–18. Stephanas was certainly with him at the time (verse 17), and his household was certainly living (verse 15); yet in regard to both he uses the aorists *ἔταξαν*, *ἀνεπλήρωσεν*, and *ἀνέπαυσαν*. It is plain that he does not use the aorist with sufficient nicety to allow of the proposed inference.

The general conclusion on the whole subject of the use of the tenses is this: It is insufficient to show that the tense used has, on strictly grammatical considerations, always a certain force; it must also appear that the attention of the writer was sufficiently drawn to the tense to use it in its normal sense. Otherwise, within obvious limits, he may have used it without any especial care, as is continually done by popular

<sup>1</sup> See, e. g., Alford *in loco*.

writers, in all languages. The two cases can generally be well enough distinguished by observing whether the tense actually used yields any especially appropriate sense in its connection; if so, the presumption is that the writer intended exactly that sense, but even this must be checked by his use of it elsewhere under similar circumstances.

Essentially the same things may be said of the tenses in Hebrew, with the proviso already made, that this language being far less rich in inflections, the exact meaning intended must often be otherwise determined. The temporal and modal distinctions of perfect, imperfect, and participle are sometimes quite obliterated, as in Lev. xi. 4-6, where the three are used (פְּרָקָה, יִצְרָרִים, מִצְרָרִים) interchangeably, in reference to the same distinction among the animals, while another corresponding distinction is expressed throughout (מִצְלָה) by the same form. Yet, as in the Greek, the distinctions of the tenses are observed whenever they are significant and require to be carefully noted by the interpreter. After giving so much space to the Greek tenses it is impossible to enter further here into this delicate and difficult subject, and the reader must be referred to the standard grammatical treatises.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Especial reference should be made to the elaborate little

Finally, the exegete, having determined the connection and the grammatical construction, must fix upon the precise meaning of the individual words. In all languages there are many words used in somewhat different senses. There are not only primitive and derivative meanings, as in the familiar English word *post*, but there are also often nice shades of difference in sense which it requires no little care to discriminate. Thus the words ψάρι and ψυχή require careful investigation ; for while the former varies in meaning from the dead body (as in Lev. xxii. 4, Hag. ii. 13, etc.) to that higher nature with which man is to love and serve God (as in Deut. iv. 29, 1 Kings ii. 4), and most commonly expresses the *animal life*, and ψυχή also (in contradistinction to πνεῦμα and σάρξ) means the same animal life ; yet both of them have several nicer shades of meaning which must be determined by the connection in which they are used. A word, too, may have a twofold sense, and yet one of these senses replace the other chronologically, or at least the secondary sense only come into use along with the primary after the latter has long

book, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, by S. R. Driver. A fund of information and scholarship may be found in this, though it may well be questioned whether the author has not pushed his grammatical hypotheses sometimes quite beyond the basis of his evidence. [Vide also, especially, Kautzsch's new edition of Gesenius (1889). ED.]

stood alone. Thus **חַטָּאת** means both *sin* and a *sin offering*; but in the latter sense it is never found before the technical language of the law in Ex. xxix. 14, after which, both senses are common. Great confusion and difficulty has arisen from the translation of the similar word **בַּטָּאת** in Lev. v. 6. The word bears the two meanings of *trespass* and *trespass offering*; but here, in a section (iv. 1–v. 13) wholly relating to the *sin offering* in distinction from the *trespass offering* (which follows in the next section (v. 14–vi. 7)) it must be rendered *trespass*. In this case the translators were probably led into the error by the corresponding double sense of *ἀμαρτία* in the LXX. The word **נָהָר** is probably another instance of a primary and secondary signification. The common, almost universal, meaning of the word is *priest*; yet since originally the civil and ecclesiastical headship of a people were vested in the same person, it came to bear also the sense of prince, and is so used a few times in Scripture, as in 2 Sam. viii. 18; xx. 26; 1 Kings iv. 5;<sup>1</sup> and perhaps also Ex. ii. 16, iii. 1, xviii. 1. A good instance in Hebrew of a word with very different derivative meanings from the same root is **נָהָרָה**. The root signifies to burn, and hence comes to be

<sup>1</sup> In favor of the sense *priest* in these places, see Gesenius, *Thesaurus*, in verbo.

used in Num. xxi. 8 for an exceedingly venomous or “fiery” serpent, and frequently in the prophets for an exalted order of beings who surround the unutterable glory of the Majesty on high. It is true that Gesenius<sup>1</sup> derives the latter from another root of the same form ; but there is no evidence of the existence of this other root, and lexicographers generally consider them the same. Abundant further examples may be seen in the lexicons.

Words have also oftentimes a peculiar sense in Scripture, different from that attached to them in profane writings. This remark applies only to the New Testament ; for it is only here that we have the literature which can serve as a means of comparison. But here it is evident that a revelation bringing new truths and new ideas into the world and making use of an old language, must either coin new words altogether, as has often been done, or else must use the old words in a somewhat new sense. Familiar instances of this are *λόγος*, *δικαιοσύνη*, *βασιλεία* (in connection with *τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *τῷν οὐρανῷ*), *ἐκκλησία*, *παλιγγενεσία*, *ἀνάστασις*, and many more. But there are many words belonging to a somewhat different class which will well repay the careful attention of the exegete. In James i. 27 we read according to the A. V., “ Pure religion and

<sup>1</sup> *Thesaurus*, in verbo.

undefiled before God and the Father is this," and the inference has been drawn that religion not merely requires, but itself consists in, blamelessness of life and the active duties of humanity; but the word for "religion" is *θρησκία*, and means not so much religion in itself, as in its outward expression and garb — what is technically known as its *cultus*. The true meaning of the word is easily learned by comparing the passages in which it occurs: in Acts xxvi. 5 it is used of "the Jew's religion"; in Col. ii. 18 of the *cultus* of angels; in James i. 26, in immediate connection with the text and in the same sense, while the adjective *θρησκος* is also used in the same verse with a similar meaning. The Syriac version has correctly apprehended the meaning.

The word *πάσχα* is used in the New Testament in a variety of significations. (1) For the paschal lamb (Matt. xxvi. 17; Mark xiv. 12, 14; Luke xxii. 7, 11, 15, and metaphorically 1 Cor. v. 7; but in this sense exclusively it is not certain that it ever occurs in John). (2) For the paschal supper generally (Matt. xxvi. 18, 19; Luke xxii. 8, 13; Heb. xi. 28, etc), it being evident that these two closely related senses are easily interchanged. (3) For the whole paschal festival of the seven days of unleavened bread (Matt. xxvi. 2; Luke ii. 41, xxii. 1; John ii. 23). (4) Indefinitely, so that it may be under-

stood either as in 2 or as in 3, and yet more naturally in that of 3 when that meaning has once been established (John ii. 13; vi. 4; xi. 55; xii. 1; xiii. 1). In John xviii. 28, xix. 14, the meaning has long been in dispute, and it is important to the chronology of our Lord's passion, as well as in other ways, to determine the sense in these passages. It will be observed that all the other passages in John fall under either 3 or 4, and that all under 4 are in John. Often as he uses the word there is no instance, outside of the passages in question, in which he can be proved to use it in any narrower sense than that of the whole seven days' feast; the presumption is, therefore, that he so uses it in these cases also. But the meaning in both these cases is definitely settled by the context. In xviii. 28 the Jews would not enter the prætorium "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the *πάσχα*." Now we know from the law that there was no defilement which could prevent the eating of the paschal lamb except that which arose from the touch of a dead body — a defilement lasting for seven days (Num. ix. 6, 7, 11, 13). Except for this and for absence on a journey, the law imperatively required every Israelite to partake (Num. ix. 10-14). Entering Pilate's prætorium would not, then, have prevented their eating the paschal lamb, but would have inter-

ferred with their joining in the sacrificial feasts of the following days. The conclusion is then clear that this must have been after the paschal supper (with which the whole feast began), and, hence, that *πάσχα* has here the same sense as generally in this Gospel.

The other instance (xix. 14) depends for its determination on another word with which it is connected, *παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα*, which requires itself to be determined. Does it mean the Preparation-day *for* the Passover, in which case it must precede it, or the Preparation-day *of* the Passover, in which case it occurred during the feast? This is easily seen. The day preceding the paschal supper is always expressed in other ways (Matt. xxvi. 17, *πρώτη τῶν ἁζύμων*; Mark xiv. 12, *πρ. ἡμέρα τ. ἁζ.*; Luke xxii. 7, *ἡμέρα τ. ἁζ.*); while, on the other hand, the ordinary term for the day before the Sabbath was precisely this *παρασκευὴ* (Matt. xxvii. 62; Mark xv. 42, where it is defined; Luke xxiii. 54, *ἡμέρα ἣν παρασκευῆς*, *καὶ σάββατον ἐπέφωσκε*; John xix. 31, 42, in both which the sense is clear). There seems, therefore, no reason to doubt that *ἡ παρασκεύὴ τοῦ πάσχα* means as distinctly the day before the Sabbath of the Passover week as we should by saying “the Friday of the Passover.”

Good illustrations of the introduction of new words, or of the modification in sense of words

already in use, may be found in *ἀγάπη* and *φιλαδελφία*. The former was coined for use in the Septuagint, and thence adopted into the New Testament and used in a much higher sense. In the latter, according to Cremer,<sup>1</sup> “It denotes the love which chooses its object with decision of will, so that it becomes self-denying or compassionate devotion to and for the same.” Such a word in such a sense became necessary from the elevation given in the New Testament to the verb *ἀγαπᾶν*, and from the word thus used came the technical plural *ἀγάπαι* = *love-feasts*, which were practiced among the early Christians. *Φιλαδελφία*, on the other hand, was a word already in use in classic authors for family affection, and it might seem that the New Testament writers should have used *φιλανθρωπία*; but this would have fallen far below the sense which they intended to convey, and by using *φιλαδελφία*, when a classical author would have required only *φιλανθρωπία*, they exalted the affection of which they spoke to a height of which classical religion had no knowledge, and for which classical language had no word.

But few words need to be added here to what has already been said of the usefulness of the study of the Semitic languages, especially the

<sup>1</sup> Cremer, *Biblico-theological Lexicon of N. T. Greek*. Translated from the 2d German edition by W. Urwick.

Syriac. The value of this language lies particularly in the study of its idioms and forms of expression, which both supply illustrations for the scanty literature of the Hebrew, and also furnish, in the New Testament, examples of the usage in other connections of phrases with which we are made familiar in the Gospels, but which have no corresponding use in Greek.

Thus the phrase “Son of man” is met with in the books of those prophets who, during the captivity in Babylon, were especially exposed to the influence of Aramaic expressions. It occurs once in Daniel, but with such frequency (ninety-two times) in Ezekiel as to suggest inquiry as to its meaning. In Syriac, **ܒܪ-ܐܢܫܐ** is simply equivalent to *man* and is constantly so used. A striking instance of this is 1 Cor. xv. 45 where it is applied to Adam himself. It may have been for this reason that it was chosen by our Lord for His own distinctive title.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE USE OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM.

SUFFICIENT illustrations of the way in which the interpretation of the New Testament is affected by Textual Criticism have already been given. It is obviously waste labor to undertake the interpretation of any passage until we know what the passage really is. The interpreter should therefore always have before him, as the basis of his work, a good critical text. It will be far better if this is supplemented with a collection of various readings, and with the authorities for them. The interpreter is not often to determine the text for himself; only in cases where the authorities are somewhat evenly balanced, and the critical editors differ in their conclusions, can the exegete safely exercise his own judgment upon the text; but it often happens that various readings, while not of sufficient weight to justify an alteration of the text, yet testify to an early understanding of its meaning which may be of importance. Thus in Luke ii. forty-nine various meanings might be given to the *ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μον*, but, as early as the Cure-

tonian Syriac (and also in several of the fathers), we have the *var. lect.* ἐν τῷ οἰκῷ, and, while this has no claim to be received as the true text, it has thus valuable support as the sense which ought to be given to the text as it stands. In John i. 18 the text is fairly doubtful between ὁ μονογενὴς νιός and μονογενὴς θεός, and although on the whole the preponderance of evidence is for the former,<sup>1</sup> yet the occurrence of the latter in the earliest and best MSS. (A, B, C\*, L, 33) is a weighty testimony of antiquity to the view then held of the character of the νιός. Something the same thing may be said of the readings κυρίον and θεοῦ in Acts xx. 28,<sup>2</sup> and of many other like passages. The interpreter can never afford to overlook such evidences of current early interpretations, while he may be satisfied that the text itself is settled beyond reasonable question.

In the Old Testament the interpreter is forced to rely much more upon his own sagacity in the matter of textual criticism, and that especially in regard to conjectural emendations of the text. The versions will here also often supply interpretations, but it generally remains more than doubtful, on the one hand, whether their inter-

<sup>1</sup> See article by Dr. E. Abbot in *Bibliotheca Sacra* for Oct., 1861, and appendix to the same prepared at the request of the American Committee of Biblical Revision.

<sup>2</sup> See article by the same in *Bibliotheca Sacra* for April, 1876.

pretations, differing from the received text, did not arise from a misunderstanding of the Hebrew rather than from a difference in the text, and, on the other hand, when they agree with the existing text, whether it may not have become corrupted long before they were made. Several instances of probable conjectural emendation have already been mentioned in a former chapter; a few additional ones of a different character may here be cited. In Ezek. i. 4 our version reads, “a whirlwind came out of the north; a great cloud,” etc., where we are struck with the abruptness of the second clause which, as it stands, has no finite verb. The present Hebrew is **כעֲרָה בָּאָה**; but by transferring the final **ה** of the first word to the beginning of the second it would read **כָּעֵר הַבָּאָה**=a whirlwind brought a great cloud out of the north, etc. Remembering that in the early manuscripts there was no division between the words, such a conjectural emendation seems highly probable, although in this case it is of no great importance in itself. In the account of the Levite, who served the tribe of Dan as a priest of idolatry at Laish, in Judges xviii. 30, his name is given as “Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.” By leaving out the **ב** from the last word and changing the vowel pointing, instead of **מַנְסֵה** we should have **מַנְשֵׁה**

=Moses. This can hardly be called a *conjectural* emendation, since not only do some of the present Hebrew MSS. read Moses, but the **נ** is marked as suspicious by being placed above the line, and the Talmudists acknowledge that it has been inserted out of respect to Moses. All the ancient versions, however, except the Vulgate, read Manasseh; but several manuscripts of the Septuagint have Moses, and this was placed as a correction in Origen's Hexapla. Moses had a son Gershom (Ex. ii. 22), but no such name is recorded as among the sons of Manasseh.

In Ezek. iii. 15 the present Hebrew text has **רָאָה**, which is so difficult to understand that the Masorets have noted as the K'ri **בָּאָה**, which has been followed in the A. V. "and I sat," and is also adopted in the Chaldee and Vulgate. There is a variation here also in the manuscripts. The sense, however, seems flat, and the conjectural emendation of Hitzig, altering only the vowel points, seems far better, **רָאָה** = "and I saw where they dwelt."

In 1 Kings i. 18 the A. V., following the present Hebrew text, reads "and *now*, my lord the king, thou knowest it not;" but all the ancient versions and two hundred manuscripts, with the early printed editions, read **הִנֵּה** instead of **וְעַת**, giving the needed emphasis on

the pronoun which the context seems to require. Here the emendation seems fully justified.

In Lev. viii. 14 it is said “Aaron and his sons laid their hands,” where the verb in the Hebrew text is in the singular; in verse 18 the same expression recurs, but the verb is there in the plural. It is put in the plural also in the former case in the Samaritan and Syriac, and doubtless was originally so written.

These instances, several of them purposely chosen as of small importance in themselves, may suffice to show the value of conjectural criticism in the interpretation of the Old Testament. If the proposed emendation has any strong probability in its favor, it will almost always be found to have been already incorporated into some of the ancient versions or to be read in some of the manuscripts; still this is not always the case. In general it may be said that such emendation should not be resorted to unless the text itself, as it stands, suggests that it is corrupt, and unless the proposed emendation is really required to remove a difficulty, or at least to give an obviously better sense. Regard should also be had to the analogy of the known corruptions of the text in manuscripts of the New Testament. The same sort of errors were likely to be committed by the copyists in the one case as in the other — due allowance being

made for the peculiarities of the Hebrew letters. The similarities between some of those letters in form has doubtless been an important factor in the variation of the text ; but this can apply only to corruptions introduced since the adoption of those letters, which was probably at the time of the Babylonish captivity. Investigation is needed in regard to the forms of letters in earlier use, and the errors which may have been introduced by their means.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE INTERPRETER AT HIS WORK.

SUPPOSING the interpreter to be prepared for his work, and to know what to do in order completely and truly to ascertain the meaning of his text, it is well to point out the actual process he should go through in his interpretation. This must vary somewhat with the character of the passage he has taken in hand, but certain things are common to them all. Among these we place, first, earnest prayer that he may be guided aright, and may be led to a true exposition of God's word, such as shall bring out neither more nor less nor otherwise than the inspiring Spirit meant to teach. We place this first on any possible view that may be taken of the nature and effect of prayer. If one cannot rise above its subjective effect, yet this subjective effect is most important in impressing upon the interpreter the solemnity of the work before him, and the necessity of bringing to it a fair mind, and of dealing truly and honestly with the language he seeks to explain. It reminds him of the necessity of calling to his aid every available

help, and doing what he has to do thoroughly and in the fear of God. But no one who has the general knowledge of the Scriptures required in his preparation, and confidence in them as the word of God, can acquiesce in so low a view of the efficacy of prayer. He must believe that in answer to his request for guidance he will be rewarded with something more than a merely subjective effect. It is not, indeed, to be imagined that every one who asks to be taught the true meaning of the Divine word, will in consequence be immediately guided to an infallible interpretation of every difficult passage; for then it would be impossible that earnest Christian commentators should differ in their explanations. Prejudice and imperfect information, and all human obstacles to a right understanding of the text render this impossible. But it is to be expected that in answer to the hearty prayer for guidance an influence will be exerted upon the interpreter to lead him in the right way, and that, however he may sometimes, perhaps often, by his own fault prevent that influence from having its legitimate control, it will be a true factor in his work, leading him towards the truth, ever more and more powerfully as he accustoms himself to be controlled by its guidance.

This, then, is to be considered as always the

first act of the interpreter; and this, if it be a true act of the spirit, necessarily involves something at least of those various personal qualifications which have already been discussed.

The next act must be a more or less unconscious, but nevertheless a very real, one, — the bringing to bear upon the particular point to be considered a general knowledge of the Scriptures. Sometimes this may require a little period of definite thought and reflection; but usually it will be the spontaneous and scarcely conscious action of the mind of the well furnished interpreter. Still, however familiar one may be with the holy volume, there will often be details of history or of prophecy, of legislation or of poetry which have a bearing upon the point to be considered, and which the interpreter should make sure that he has rightly in his mind before proceeding further. Is he treating, *e. g.*, of 1 Cor. x. 2, which speaks of the Israelites as “all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea?” Let him be sure that he is thoroughly familiar with all the historical circumstances connected with the cloud and with the passage of the sea, and if his recollection is in any respect dim or uncertain, let him revive his knowledge of the history before going further. But a general knowledge of Scripture is of still more importance in its control over the *character* of the in-

terpretation than in its bearing upon particular facts which may be mentioned ; and this, as repeatedly urged, must be already in the mind of the interpreter exerting over him an influence which may not always be consciously recognized at the moment.

He has next to consider the particular book in which his passage occurs ; its character and general purpose, the period when it was written, the person by whom it was written, and the people for whom it was primarily intended. This will bring before him not only the human mould in which the Divine truth has been cast in this particular case ; but will also show whatever there may have been in the time and the circumstances to limit such full and clear expressions of Divine truth as occur elsewhere. It is important always to bear in mind the progressive character of revelation, advancing gradually in the fullness of its declaration of truth as men were educated to bear it by means of its own declarations given less perfectly in the earlier times of spiritual darkness. Hence the position of any book in the line of a progressive revelation must always be an important element in its interpretation. This is true not only of great intervals of time, but even of very short periods when those periods have been times of great advance in religious knowledge. Thus the Gos-

pels and the Epistles are separated from each other by the sacrifice of Calvary, the resurrection and ascension, and the day of Pentecost. It would be manifestly improper to expect the same explicitness of doctrinal teaching in what went before as in what came after these events. Take, as a single illustration, the declaration of our Lord on His last visit to the temple when “certain Greeks” sought an interview with Him: “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John xii. 32). These words, as they stand, are certainly somewhat dim and enigmatical. They evidently hint at what could not then be fully told, and they are to be interpreted in view of the necessary restraint which then existed, and prevented a full and explicit teaching of all that was meant to be conveyed. Compare with it the same teaching at a later date: It seemed good “that in Him should all fulness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. i. 19, 20).

The personality of the writer and the circumstances under which he wrote are sometimes obviously of great importance to the right understanding of his writing. Paul’s glowing confidence, “I have fought a good fight, I have

finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8), would have been out of place at an earlier period of his life than when the time of his departure was at hand ; and the interpreter needs to associate it very intimately with that time, that he may not leave it to be understood as a fitting expression for the ordinary Christian in the ordinary course of life. Jeremiah's cursing of the day of his birth (Jer. xx. 14-18), and Elijah's prayer that he might die (1 Kings xix. 4) are to be treated in connection with the whole lives and with the circumstances of those prophets at the time, and it is also only in view of these that the Divine dealing with them in reply can be properly understood.

When the writer cannot be certainly known, as in the case of several of the historical books of the Old Testament, yet from the book as a whole enough can be gathered of his character and purposes to aid materially in the understanding of particular passages in his writing. And in the New Testament, also, there is one Epistle—that to the Hebrews—of which we may not be able to determine the author ; but we may know certainly that he was a Christian Jew, seeking to convince his fellow Jews, on the ground of their own Scriptures, of the temporary

character of their dispensation and of its being superseded by the greatly superior dispensation of the Gospel. These facts enable us to interpret readily and without hesitation several passages (such, *e. g.*, as vii. 3) which, if they stood by themselves, might seem either obscure or capable of bearing quite a different sense.

The interpreter will also more or less unconsciously bring to bear upon the passage before him his general knowledge of geography, of history, of archaeology, and of science. If the text stands in a special relation to any of these, in matters in which his knowledge is not altogether clear, he needs to look up such points before proceeding further. A matter of mere detail, which easily escapes from the memory, is easily ascertained ; but if more than this is required, the labor of informing himself will soon convince the student of the absolute necessity of a full preparation in such matters before taking in hand the work of interpretation. At all events this must be done, and thoroughly done, before any satisfactory result can be expected. Many grievous slips of even famous commentators might be pointed out as warning examples of its neglect. For such neglect there is far less excuse now, when the means of acquiring information have been so greatly multiplied, than there was a few generations ago. It is em-

inently necessary that the interpreter in these respects should be, in the current phraseology of the day, "abreast of his time."

All that has thus far been spoken of may be considered as in some sense preliminary work, and is simply bringing to bear upon a particular passage what has already been said of the preparation and work of the interpreter in general. Now he must look to his text. If in the Greek, he must examine it in a critical edition, and if he finds the authorities for it clear, he can then accept it at once as the true text on which he is to comment. If he finds the authorities pretty evenly balanced, and the critical editors divided in their judgment, he must then exercise his own judgment, either coming to a positive conclusion, or accepting the alternative readings as having each a fair claim to acceptance. It is very seldom that he will be brought to this dilemma; but when it occurs, he must accept the facts as they are, and not as he might like to have them. In the Old Testament he will always do well to compare the ancient versions, but he cannot accept their authority as either positively establishing, or positively correcting, the text as it stands. They only constitute a reason for further inquiry, and sometimes give a *prima facie* presumption on the one side or the other, and this presumption is to be increased or

diminished by the general knowledge the interpreter has already brought to his work. Quite commonly, however, the reasons, if any exist, for doubting the accuracy of the received Hebrew text will only appear on a close and careful examination of the text itself in the course of its interpretation.

The context, remote and immediate, is the next thing to come under consideration. Only in such peculiar books as parts of the Proverbs, where each verse in some sort stands by itself, is it possible to understand rightly any sentence out of the connection in which it stands ; and even these different and seemingly contradictory proverbs are purposely so placed that they may be seen to be the complementary parts of the same truth (see, *e. g.*, Prov. xxvi. 4, 5). Of all single points in interpretation the consideration of the context is perhaps the most important. The strange conceit of Archbishop Trench and others that Barabbas was the popular hero of a Jewish sedition against the Romans was founded partly on a mistaken idea of the word  $\lambda\gamma\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$ <sup>1</sup> in John xviii. 40 (cf. Matt. xxvii. 44; John x. 1, 8, etc.), and partly on a misapprehension of the words in which he is described by the other Evangelists (Matt. xxvii. 16; Mark xv. 7; Luke xxiii. 19). It is quite ingeniously wrought

<sup>1</sup> See John x. 1, 8, and the Lexicons.

out,<sup>1</sup> but could never have been entertained for a moment had it been remembered that Pilate was seeking earnestly to release Jesus, and could not, therefore, have proposed as an alternative to the Jews the release of any one whom they desired to save. The whole circumstances of the narrative require that he should have proposed to them as obnoxious a person as he could.

After a due study first of the general, then of the immediate context, must come the grammatical construction, and finally the examination of the particular words used. In regard to both these last points care must be taken to avoid the constraint of excessive attention to minutiae. Minute points of grammar are indeed often important, and rightly determine the true meaning where there is reason to suppose that the writer used them intentionally. But it is not the habit of popular writers in any language to be always closely bound by grammatical rules when their attention is not given to the precise force of words. This may be illustrated by an example in our own language. A very common provincialism is in the use of *will* for *shall*, yet no one would think of maintaining that the provincial writer meant to imply an

<sup>1</sup> Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, pp. 293-297; also *Synonyms of the N. Test.*, s. v.  $\lambda\eta\sigma\tau\grave{\eta}s$ .

intention whenever he used the word *will* in the wrong place. The human authors of Scripture were, for the most part, popular writers, and it is folly to undertake to maintain that their language is always nicely grammatical. A fair consideration of the use of the prepositions *εἰς* and *ἐν*, and of the particles *ἴνα* and *ὅτι*, is alone sufficient to dispel such an idea. At the same time when an author wishes to emphasize an idea, he will naturally do it grammatically. The want of grammatical accuracy generally arises not from want of knowledge, but from want of care and attention to minutiae. Grammatical construction, therefore, both in Hebrew and Greek, must always remain one of the essential elements of correct interpretation ; only it is not to be pushed too far, and, where no especial emphasis was placed upon it by the writer, be made to override the teachings of the context or the analogy of Scripture.

Much the same things may be said, but still more strongly, of the study of the meaning of particular words. This may in the first place be ascertained by the use of the lexicons, often-times with exactness. But the makers of lexicons are men, and liable to the same errors and prejudices with other men. In every important place the student must make for himself an independent determination of the meaning of the

words on which the sense turns. The chief means to be used for this purpose is an examination of the *usage*. In words of frequent occurrence the result will ordinarily be conclusive; yet even then, it is to be remembered that writers then, as now, occasionally employed a word in a peculiar sense, of which, in a limited literature, it might be hard to find another instance. A vulgar sense of a word, too, may occasionally find its place in writings from which it is ordinarily excluded. To recur again to an English illustration: the word *met* is common in vulgar use, in some parts of the country, for *overtook*. It would be unsafe to infer from a newspaper account of the *meeting* of two vessels at sea that they were sailing in opposite directions, although such is unquestionably the force of the word which is observed in all careful writing. Usage, however, is the paramount law for the determination of the meaning of words, and only apparently fails when there is really a failure in correctly ascertaining it. In case the word is a common one in Scripture, especially with the particular writer in question, only very cogent reasons can justify the supposition of its use in a peculiar sense. Thus *vόμος* (with or without the article) is used with great frequency of the divinely given law of the old dispensation, and sometimes, by a natural modification of that

law as written, of the books, whether of the Pentateuch only or of the whole Old Testament, in which it is contained. It is scarcely possible to find a word with its sense more distinctly fixed by a large number of definite instances of its use. Yet a very few times (as Rom. vii. 23, 25 ; viii. 2 ; and especially iii. 27, διὰ ποίου νόμου ; τῶν ἔργων ; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως) it is used in an absolute and general sense of the law of God laying claim to universal obedience. This sense is peculiar, infrequent, and opposed to the great mass of instances of its use, but is nevertheless perfectly well established by the context and scope of the argument.

When New Testament usage is limited, the determination of the meaning of a word can frequently be aided by a comparison with the use of the same word in the Septuagint, always remembering the great advance in revelation from the one to the other, and the consequent necessity of using some terms in a higher sense and others in a new sense which the introduction of Christianity occasioned. When the word is a Hebrew one, light may be thrown upon its meaning oftentimes by the Greek word corresponding to it in the New Testament, or, if it does not happen to be used there, by the word which translates it in the Septuagint and in the other ancient versions, especially in the Chaldee Targums. These helps are most apt to fail

precisely where they are most needed, in the case of very unusual words, and words  $\ddot{\alpha}\pi\alpha\xi\lambda\epsilon\gamma\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$ , because here the versions are apt either to transfer the Hebrew term bodily into their own text or else to avoid it altogether. Still material help can often be obtained in this way, though it must always be used with the recollection that the ancient translator, whatever special advantages he may have had, yet can give no authoritative translation beyond the exercise of his own judgment in the circumstances and at the time when he wrote. The translation of Jerome, as has been remarked, was made under exceptional advantages of learning, conscientiousness, and thorough familiarity with Jewish tradition, and is therefore of peculiar value in this respect to the interpreter. When these means of ascertaining the meaning of a word fail, there is still a resort to a more uncertain, but still valuable, kind of evidence, in the use of the term in the cognate languages. It is true that a word in passing down the lines of even closely affiliated languages may come to have widely different significations, as, *e. g.*, the adjectives *hell* or *hold* in German from the same roots as the nouns of the same form in English, or the verbs *bekommen* and *become*. Still, when a word is seen to have substantially the same sense in several different branches of a linguistic family, the presumption is strong that it will

bear a like sense in the one under consideration. Of course the Chaldee and the Syriac, as the most closely related branches of the Semitic family, are most important for their illustration of the meaning of Hebrew words. Etymology is another important, but sometimes deceptive, source of information; for the derivative meanings of words are sometimes strangely unlike their primary sense, as in the notorious case of the English word *means*. Each one of these several sources, however, contributes its quota of probability, and a judicious use of them all will generally determine the point with sufficient certainty; for it is seldom that a word is at the same time very rare and very important.

It not infrequently happens that a single word of the original is not always expressed by the same word in a translation. When this is not due to distinct senses of the original word and occurs with uniformity in different translations, we are naturally led to look in the original for some shade of meaning which cannot be so exactly expressed by any single word in the languages of the translations. Thus the very common word קְבָרָה is rendered in the A. V. (excluding many peculiar and accidental translations) by more than sixty different terms, and in the Septuagint (besides its combinations with other words) by about forty, and by as many in the Vulgate. It is obvious, after making all possible

allowance for uncertainty of translation, that this must be a word in the Hebrew of such broad and general signification that it cannot be sufficiently rendered by any single term in the other languages.

On the other hand, many different words in the original are sometimes represented by a single term in the translation. Thus the English *lion* is used to translate six different words in the Hebrew; and all those words, though not with the same uniformity, are rendered by the Greek  $\lambda\acute{e}o\mu\nu$  and the Latin *leo*. Here it is evident that the Hebrew recognized some distinction in the animals, which was no longer familiar to the Septuagint translators, or else which they had no terms to express. This fact may throw light upon several passages of the Old Testament in which the lion is mentioned.

One other point must be considered before leaving this part of our subject altogether. It sometimes happens that a word is used in the New Testament in a different sense from that which it bears in classic Greek, and yet not with such frequency that it is possible to establish its New Testament meaning on as broad a basis as might be desirable. In such cases the usage of the Septuagint becomes of great importance; for it not only offers the opportunity for a larger induction, but also furnishes a sufficient reason why the New Testament writers should have

used a word in a different sense from that which it bears in ordinary Greek. A single instance must suffice. The word *χρηματίζω* originally meant in classic Greek *to do* or *to carry on business* of any kind, but from the third century B. C., it came to have the sense *to take and bear a name or title*. It is possible that in one or two instances in the Septuagint, and in the New Testament it is used in one or other of these meanings (the former in 1 Kings xviii. 27, the latter in Rom. vii. 3); but in all other of the nine instances of its use in the New Testament, and of the ten in the Septuagint, it certainly refers to a Divine command or direction, and probably also in these cases. The same may be said also of the derivative word *χρηματισμός* in the three instances of its occurrence. The Scriptural sense of the word is therefore completely established, and in the A. V. it is frequently translated by “warned of God” or equivalent expressions (Matt. ii. 12, 22; Luke ii. 26; Acts x. 22; Heb. viii. 5, xi. 7). This sense becomes of especial interest in its bearing upon the meaning of Acts xi. 26, which, according to this supposition might be translated: “The Apostles taught much people, and by Divine direction called the disciples Christians first in Antioch.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, 1880, pp. 14, 15.

When the interpreter has completed these several processes of his work, it remains that he should consider his result as a whole. It often happens in any work, mechanical or intellectual, that in the process of elaborating the details, and while the attention is fixed upon them, a certain distortion of parts will occur which is not observed until the result is reviewed as a whole. Such a review is therefore never to be omitted, and it will be of more value if it can be made at some interval from the previous work. The interpreter has in this simply to consider the results at which he has arrived, and to see if, apart entirely from the process by which they were reached, they appear in themselves probable. If not, he must go over his work again with the purpose of discovering where he has exaggerated, or has laid too little stress upon his details. But if he has been conscientious in his process throughout, and has exercised common sense at each point, the result may be expected to commend itself to his own and to other minds, and the review will confirm his confidence in his work. He may reasonably trust that he has been enabled to bring out truly the "mind of the Spirit," and may have good hope that his work will redound to the glory of his Master.



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